This issue: An interview with **BRUCE JONES**, a heroine history of the **BLACK CANARY**, and a special look at comics censorship in the '50s!

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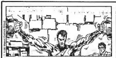

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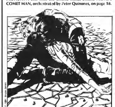
PREVIEW: A talk with the crazed minds behind Marvel's COMET MAN, orchestrated by Peter Quinones, on page 18.



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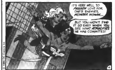
INTERVIEW: Bruce Jones gasses about writing, drawing, Pacific Comics, frustrating artists, and more on page 23.


IT'S VERY WELL TO PREACH LOVE FOR ONE'S ENEMIES, WONDER WOMAN...
...BUT YOU WON'T FIND IT SO EASY WHEN YOU SEE WHAT ATROCITIES HE HAS COMMITED!
4

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HERO HISTORY: Bill Kropfhauser takes a look at the Black Canary, from Golden Age to Green Arrow, on page 36.

Page 6: Editorial
Wandering off in search of big bucks
by Art Cover

Page 9: Newsflashes
News from Eclipse, Marvel, and more
by J. Collier

Page 12: Silly Cover
A super-special team-up issue
by Vince Musacchia

Page 13: Coming Distractions
On the stands from March 16-31.
by J. Collier

Page 18: Coming of the Comet Man
A talk with the somewhat odd creators
by Peter Quinones

Page 23: Bruce Jones
An interview with the writer/artist/editor
by Kim Thompson

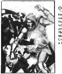
Page 36: A Tough Old Bird
A hero history of the Black Canary
by Bill Kropfhauser

Page 48: Ban and Superman
A look at comics censorship in the '50s
by Brian K. Busch

Page 53: Comics in Review
Reviews of *Batman and the Outsiders*, *Shatter*, *Blue Beetle*, *Elementals Special*, *Tales of the Sun-Runners*, and *The Shadow*
by R.A. Jones

Page 61: Amazing Readers
More gripes about Marvel and *Crisis*...
by The Readers

Page 66: Small Press Watch
Dale Luciano, the godfather of the newaves
by Scott McCloud



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A Farewell Editorial by Art Cover

Although I've always been willing to accept a compliment concerning the look and tone of *Amazing Heroes* lately, the truth of the matter is that as managing editor of this world-shattering title, I've really had very little to do with it—although there have been times when my wife and I have struggled mightily over reams of observations about Batman, Deadman, etc., all rife with confused syntax of historical proportions Like the syntax of that sentence you just read. It ain't easy thinking straight, particularly about comic books.

Beginning in the early '70s, around the time that I embarked—theoretically—on a professional writing career, I rediscovered comic books and, thanks to the efforts of a few friends, purchased a few old collections consisting of back issues published throughout the '60s. I not only rediscovered the DC super heroes that had so enthralled me during my formative years, but read for the first time the historic Lee-Kirby and Lee-Ditko Marvel Comics—all in a gulp. It was mind-boggling stuff, and in search of a four-color experience of similiar intensity, I continued to follow super hero comics, as well as books of other kinds. At first it wasn't very expensive or time-consuming to keep up, but gradually, as the audience for comics shrank but the demand for product increased from loyal readers, keeping up became almost a full-time hobby, and my other reading interests—particularly in the last six or seven years—suffered as a result. Since there's an occasional domino effect to such things, my word-slinging ability—especially my fictive slinging—also suffered, although various other factors, including perhaps a few psychological aberrations, may have had something to do with it.

The actual time I spent editing *Amazing Heroes* averaged to about ten hours a week—not enough to do the great, imaginative job I thought the magazine deserved from me, but not low enough to be disastrous either. I've learned one major lesson, I hope, from reading all those manuscripts—an experience which amounted to a vicarious reading of the books I've stored in my garage—is that the current slavish devotion to continuity in super hero comics is perhaps the most artistically reactionary, basically non-creative approach conceivable. The genuine problem of how to believably sustain a fast-paced thrilling tale of derring-do in a universe where science makes sense only when it's convenient to the plot, upon examination, really has very little to do with what the writer and artist thought the character in question would be like during the seventies, the '60s . . . or for that matter, the '40s. Entire issues of various titles read more like history texts than they do stories. And many titles—both team-up books and solo books—are hidebound in story formulas that were exhausted years ago, but which the books' current creators are locked into because A) that's how the powers that be perceive the books, or B) that's how the fans—what's left of them compared to the days of old—perceive the books. Instead of progressing, most super-hero titles are locked into misinterpreted traditions by creators who've read the wrong lessons in the books they loved as kids or which made their company successful, or their characters are locked into histories that can't be changed from what one writer or editor in the past thought of quickly because he had a Thursday deadline. Often continuity is snarled for trivial reasons that have nothing to do with basic story validity—a new team of creators may have something against the old team, or merely have just detested their work on the character or the changes they had made, a slightly more valid reason that not only confuses my syntax, but points up the fact that slavish devotion to continuity is a no-win situation. Sometimes it's best to ignore it, sometimes it's best to follow it for the long-term impact of the character in the public's mind.

Believability should be the rule. Characters and their stories should be consistent within certain established frameworks, and artists and editors alike should strive for a mood in their books that does more than show us everybody standing around gabbing about how the world's gonna end soon. How can characters be believable if their stage is obviously filled with mere props?

In other words, I personally believe that the super hero comic, on the average, has reached a dead end, and the perceived demands of the marketplace aren't helping the situation any.

How have I responded to this plight? Well, I've sworn off reading comics—but not accumulating them—for at least a year. I seem to recall that there are these things called books—the places where a lot of comic writers swipe their ideas, when they're not swiping them from movies, and I thought I would explore some of the stacks of those that I've been accumulating while I've been reading so many comics and the manuscripts about them.

My parting with Fantagraphics, Inc. is amicable in the extreme. I'll probably do some occasional writing for *Amazing Heroes* and *The Comics Journal,* and I've been trying to get Kim and Gary to compromise their esthetic principles and publish my answer to the current creative super hero dilemma so I can bug them for money more often.

And I'll probably continue doing many—but I hope not all—of the things I was doing while in my editorial harnass. I help my wife run the fabulous Dangerous Visions bookstore in Sherman Oaks, I'm still finishing the front matter to an anthology of New Wave science fiction to be published by Blue Jay Books, I'm writing a fourth children's book for Byron Preiss Productions, and I'm still writing an occasional TV script. *Space Clusters,* drawn by Alex Nino, should be published by DC this year. I'm hoping that by not working in so many different areas at once, I'll be able to concentrate my talents more effectively and win the Nobel Prize for Literature next year. It's not too late if I start working sometime this week.

So, you see, there is life after *Amazing Heroes*.

Or is there?

Kim, wait, I've just thought of something—!

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CONTRIBUTOR'S INFO

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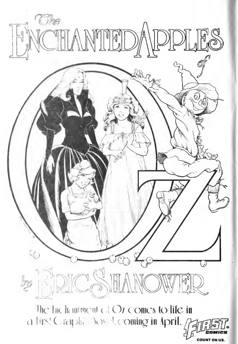
INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

Aircel	52	First Comics	8
Amazing Heroes	4-5	MDW Comics	15
Blackthorne Publishing	35	Renegade Press	17,22,58
Comics Interview	64	Threat	51
Comico	i.b.cover	WaRP Graphics	i.f.cover
DC Comics	44		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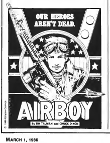
Newsflashes

FLOODED: Eclipse Comics has been severely stricken by the floods that have plagued Northern California. The home of publisher DEAN MULLANEY and Editor-in-Chief CAT YRONWODE has been completed submerged, as have the Eclipse Comics offices, which were on the second floor of an office building. (However, Mullaney was able to carry most of the original art up to the unaffected third floor.)

Eclipse's entire backstock of comics is gone, and they will be unevailabe from the publisher for the foreseeable future. Also, several books have been delayed by the flood. They are: ***Crisis on Infinite Earths Index*** **#1** (delayed by possibly several weeks); ***Miracleman #7*** and ***DNAgents #7*** (late by two or three weeks); and ***Scout #7***—a fill-in job by TOM YEATES (delayed by one or two weeks). Yronwode said ***Scout #8*** may stay on schedule.

Further scheduling changes may occur as a result of the flooding, and ***Amazing Heroes*** will present them as they become available.

BI-WEEKLY COMIC: With the 75-cent ***Miraclemen***, Eclipse established itself as a pioneer in terms of inexpensive comics from the independents. This summer, Eclipse goes for broke with a *50-cent*, 16-page color comic: ***Airboy***, by TIMOTHY (***Scout***) TRUMAN and CHUCK (***Evangeline***) DIXON. On top of everything else, it will be released on a bi-weekly format.



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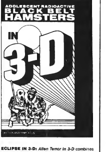

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ECLIPSE IN 3-D: ***Alien Terror in 3-D*** combines the concepts behind ***Alien Encounters*** and ***Tales of Terror***, with "Standard Procedure" by BRUCE JONES and LEE WEEKS, "Wishing World" by MARK EVANIER and JOHN POUND, "Sweet Dreams" by JORDI DIAZ CASTRILLO, and "It Was Just a Matter of Time" by KEITH TUCKER. The book will ship in May at a cost of $2.25.

Other 3-D titles scheduled by Eclipse for 1986 include ***Seduction of the Innocent 3-D #2*** (March), ***Mr. Monster's Three-Dimensional Hi-Octane Horror*** #1 (April), ***Adolescent Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters in 3-D #1*** (June), and ***Laser Eraser and Pressbutton in 3-D #1*** (June). Incidentally, the art in ***Black Belt Hamsters in 3-D*** is by ***Stig's Inferno*** artist TY TEMPLETON.

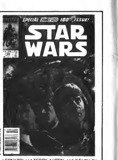
ECLIPSE NEWS: ***Champions*** is a six-part limited series by DENNIS MALLONEE and CAROL LAY, featuring the characters from the role-playing game of the same name. ***Champions***, which has a monthly frequency, is printed on Mando paper at a cost of $1.25. The premiere issue introduces the battle for the coveted Hellfire Crown. . . . STEVE OLIFF has colored the back-up story in ***Mr. Monster #5*** on a computer. The story, "My Fears," is by JEFF BONIVERT, and

NEWSFLASHES

appeared originally in ***Star*Reach #7*** (this story was BONIVERT's first published work) . . . In May, the three-issue series ***World of Wood*** debuts, with an homage cover by DAVE STEVENS. The book will cost $1.75, and will be entirely devoted to spotlighting the legendary art of WALLY WOOD . . . ***Tales of the Beanworld #4*** will ship in May. The story is titled "Beanish Breaks Out," and it concerns a bean that breaks out of the Army to become a civilian. The book costs $1.50 . . . With its 10th issue, TOM STAZER's ***Spaced*** will be distributed by Eclipse. With that selfsame issue, the price drops (how's *that* for news?) from $1.60 to $1.50.

MARVEL MUTANT NEWS: ALAN DAVIS, artist on Marvel UK's ***Captain Britain*** (not to mention Eclipse's ***Miracleman*** and DC's ***Outsiders***), will pencil and ink the ***New Mutants Annual #2***, due out in late June. Captain Britain will guest-star, as will Mojo and Spiral from the ***Longshot*** limited series. The ***New Mutants Annual*** will tie in with the ***X-Men Annual #10***, shipping September 2. ART ADAMS will pencil and TERRY AUSTIN will ink the book, which will introduce the X-Babies . . . ***New Mutants #42*** spotlights Cannonball, and is by writer CHRIS CLAREMONT, penciller JACKSON GUICE, and inker KYLE BAKER. As of issue **#44**, Baker becomes the series' regular inker. ***New Mutants #43*** features the pencilling of STEVE PURCELL, and in that issue, the young ones return to their Massachusetts academy for revenge on the Hellions.

OTHER MARVEL NEWS: ***Doctor Who*** has been cancelled with **#23** . . . ***Eternals #10*** will be written by WALTER SIMONSON, pencilled by KEITH POLLARD, and inked by DANNY BULANADI. The book will be out in late March. The final issue of the series, **#12**, will be out in late May, and will be double-sized . . . GEOFF ISHERWOOD, who has worked on ***Conan the King***, will ink SAL BUSCEMA's pencils in ***Thor #369***, shipping March 25 . . . STEVE DITKO will pencil ***Daredevil #234***, which will be written by MARK GRUENWALD and inked by KLAUS JANSON. The issue, shipping May 6, features the return of Madcap from ***Captain America***, which GRUENWALD scripts . . . Doctor Doom is the villain in ***Cloak and Dagger #10***, in which a drug connection is traced to Latveria . . . ***Star Wars*** is being cancelled with **#107**, out in early June. That finale will be by, as usual, writer JO DUFFY and artist CINDY MARTIN . . . ***Web of Spider-Man #18*** answers the long-standing question, "Where is Spider-Man?" The issue will be out in mid-May . . . The next four Marvel Press posters will be out in May. They will be: Thor, painted by JOE JUSKO, the Silver Surfer, by KEITH POLLARD (who is also the artist on the forthcoming Silver Surfer graphic novel), Phoenix, by RICK LEONARDI and TERRY AUSTIN, and X-Factor, by WALTER SIMONSON, JOE RUBINSTEIN, and colorist GEORGE ROUSSOS. The X-Factor poster will re-depict the cover to ***X-Factor #1*** . . . Magneto, the Beast, Doctor Strange, and Wonder Man will guest star in the double-sized final issue of the ***Vision and the Scarlet Witch***, as Wanda gives birth . . . ***Marvel Age #42*** will cover feature the newest Epic Comics series, ***Steelgrip Starkey***. Also, the Mutant Spotlight will be on Wolverine. The book will be on sale in early June . . . The final issue of ***Power Man/Iron Fist #125***, will be written by JIM OWSLEY and drawn by MARK BRIGHT, and will be on sale in early June . . . ***Marvel Tales #191*** will be a special issue that will reprint, in one package, ***Spider-Man #96-98***. These issues were ground-breaking when they first appeared, since they dealt with drug abuse, and went on sale without the Comics Code seal of approval. Green Goblin is the villain . . . Gilded Lily appears in the first ***Alpha Flight Annual***, by BILL MANTLO, LARRY STROMAN, and GERRY TALAOC. The issue will ship May 27. In that book, Lily's spirit possesses Alpha Flight's headquarters . . . The Doctor Strange graphic novel, by J.M. DeMATTEIS and DAN GREEN, will ship May 27, at a cost of $5.95, and will feature fully painted art by GREEN.



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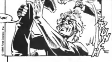
AARDVARK COMMENT: With ***Cerebus #86***, the price will rise to $2.00 ($2.50 in its native Canada). The story page count will remain at 20, and the newsprint paper stock stays the same.

RIGHT: From Revolver #7, an all-Steve Ditko issue.
BELOW: The Badger as inked by Rick Bryant.



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BADGER, INK: RICK BRYANT is the new inker on ***The Badger*** beginning with **#14**. The title of the story is "Snake Bile Cognac." Badger begins a trip around the world the wrong way—he boards planes thinking he's returning to Wisconsin. The first place he deplanes is Sydney, Australia. Issue **#15** introduces an Australian super-hero in a story titled "Enter the Wombat."

NEXUS NEWS: In ***Nexus #24***, the Black Pencil introduces the Heads' new weapon—a laser one kilometer long. It devastates the Soviet fleet before being caught on the event horizon of a black hole. "Gravity Well" is the title of **#25**, introducing a major development in Nexus' universe—a project to extract energy from an artificial black hole. STEVE RUDE has done full-color paintings for both of these issues' covers.

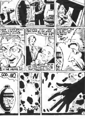
SWAMP THING NEWS: RICK VEITCH will be the regular penciller on ***Swamp Thing*** with **#51**, and the inker will be ALFREDO ALCALA. Former regular penciller STEVE BISSETTE will continue doing the covers for the series by himself.

Former ***Swamp Thing*** inker JOHN TOTLEBEN will do both the pencils and inks for the ***Swamp Thing Annual***, which is scheduled to come out between **#s 52** and **53**.

Bissette told ***Amazing Heroes*** that he and Totleben will return to the book to draw the last issue that ALAN MOORE writes, whenever that is.

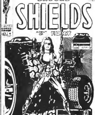
Finally, the contracts have been signed for a Swamp Thing/Mr. Monster team-up, which will feature MICHAEL T. GILBERT's horror hero. The book, Bissette said, will be published by DC.

RENEGADE NEWS: ***Revolver #7*** kicks off a three-part all-STEVE DITKO extravaganza. Static's adventure begins when "The General" has kidnapped Doc. Meanwhile, "The Exploding Room" waits for Bruno in his nightmares. And finally, "Shag and the Uglies" is the beginning of a new strip. Also, ***Revolver #s 7-9*** preview Renegade's newest title, ***Ditko's World***, which debuts in July. ***Revolver #s 10-12*** will feature the talents of STEVE DITKO, DAVID DAY, STEVE BISSETTE, CARMINE INFANTINO, ERNIE COLON, and RICH LARSEN, among others . . . ***Ms. Tree #29*** begins a new storyline for Tree, as her stay in the mental institution leaves her with an aversion for guns . . . In ***Phoney Pages #2***, by TERRY BEATTY, various comics get their satirical lumps. Featured are "Marshall Rogers' Neighborhood," "Brooke Shields, Agent of F.U.R.Y.," "Chaplin America," and "Leave It to Little Beaver."



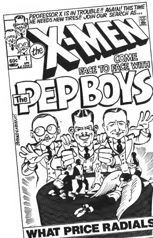
© 1986 Steve Ditko

From Terry Beatty's Phoney Pages.



© 1986 Terry Beatty

SILLY COVER


PROFESSOR X IS IN TROUBLE!! AGAIN! THIS TIME HE NEEDS NEW TIRES!! JOIN OUR SEARCH AS...
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COME FACE TO FACE WITH
The PEP BOYS
WHAT PRICE RADIALS?

X-Men © 1986 Marvel Comics Group

By Vince Musacchia

Coming DISTRACTIONS

MARCH 16-31

AIRCEL PUBLISHING

☐ **SAMURAI #4**

Story/Art	Pat McEown & B. Bleir

[$1.70 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships March 15]

BLACKTHORNE

☐ **BRENDA STARR, REPORTER BOOK ONE**

The sexy reporter returns in a thrilling and romantic series of adventures.

Story/Art	Dale Massick

[$5.95 72-page direct-sales squarebound book; ships in March]

☐ **LITTLE NEMO IN SLUMBERLAND BOOK ONE**

Winsor McCay's classic fantasy represented in a series of vintage Sunday strips.

Story/Art	Winsor McCay

[$5.95 72-page direct-sales squarebound book; ships in March]

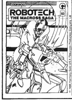
☐ **TARZAN, BOOK TWO**

Includes the classic "Tarzan and the Barbarians," and other tales.

Story/Art	Burne Hogarth

[$5.95 72-page direct-sales squarebound book; ships in March]

COMICO COMICS



© 1986 Harmony Gold U.S.A./Tatsunoko Production Company, Ltd.

☐ **ROBOTECH THE MACROSS SAGA #10**

"Blind Game"

Story	Jack Herman
Art	Leeke & Kelnick

[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/21]

☐ **ELEMENTALS SPECIAL #1**

A special issue tackles the problem of child abuse.

Plot/Pencils	Willingham
Script	Jack Herman
Inks	Rich Rankin

[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/21]

DC COMICS

☐ **ACTION #581**

Seeing through Superman's eyes. Plus Supes requires legal help.

Story	Cary Bates
Art	Kurt Schaffenberger

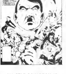
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 4/1, newsstand o/s 4/24]

☐ **ADVENTURES OF THE OUTSIDERS #35**

The Outsiders vs. Adolf Hitler!

Story	Mike W. Barr
Art	Davis & Neary

[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/25, newsstand o/s 4/17]



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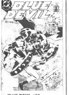
☐ **ALL-STAR SQUADRON #59**

Where does a robot find life? For Robotman it's in the form of a reconstructed Mekanique. Plus: The Spectre.

Story	R. & D. Thomas
Art	Jonas & Collette

[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 4/1, newsstand o/s 4/24]



© 1986 DC Comics Inc.

☐ **BLUE DEVIL #26**

Special Baseball issue! A murderous creature preys on major league players and their fans.

Story	Cohn & Mishkin
Art	Kupperberg & Collins
Cover	Cullins & Martin

[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/25, newsstand o/s 4/17]

☐ **BOOSTER GOLD #5**

Origin Issue! An alien crashlands on Earth seeking aid from Booster and Superman.

Story	Dan Jurgens
Art/Cover	Jurgens & DeCarlo

[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/25, newsstand o/s 4/17]

☐ **THE DARK KNIGHT TRIUMPHANT**

Part two of series. We are introduced to Robin, and she looks better in shorts than Dick Grayson ever did.

Story/Art	Frank Miller
Inks	Klaus Janson
Color	Lynn Varley

[$2.95 48-page full color direct-sales comic; ships 3/25]

☐ **DC CHALLENGE #9**

Metron and the Guardians try to figure this mess. JLA! Titans! Outsiders!

Story	Roy Thomas
Art	Heck & Magyar
Cover	Brozowski & Mechlen

[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 4/1]

☐ **DETECTIVE COMICS #564**

Batman & Robin vs. Two-Face. Plus Green Arrow.

Story	Doug Moench
Art	Colan & Bob Smith
Cover	Colan & Giordano

[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 4/1, newsstand o/s 4/24]

☐ GREEN LANTERN CORPS #202

The Corps sets up shop. But is Marina Del Rey ready for them?

Story .... **Steve Englehart**
Art .... **Staton & Farmer**
Cover .... **Staton & Patterson**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/17]

☐ INFINITY, INC. #28

Mr. Bones makes his bid at escape, while Carcharo takes over Helix.

Story .... **R. & D. Thomas**
Art .... **McFarlane & DeZuniga**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/25]

☐ LORDS OF THE ULTRA-REALM #2

Savage in his new form as Falkon faces the threat of the Prince of Madness.

Story .... **Doug Moench**
Art/Cover .... **Pat Broderick**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 4/1]

☐ NEW TEEN TITANS #22

The second half of the original Titans against Cheshire as she attempts to disrupt a world summit.

Story .... **Marv Wolfman**
Art .... **Barreto & Tanghal**
Cover .... **Barreto & Tanghal**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/25]

☐ THE SHADOW #3

The die is cast as the Shadow hits New York after hours—and the underground will never be the same!

Story/Art .... **Howard Chaykin**
[$1.50 direct sales color comic; ships 4/1]

☐ SWAMP THING #50

Grand Guignol Finale! Double sized conclusion to "American Gothic". Swamp Thing and DC's supernatural characters face a Crisis of their own.

Story .... **Alan Moore**
Art .... **Bissette & Totleben**
Cover .... **Bissette & Totleben**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/17]

☐ TALES OF THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #337

Changes afoot for the Legion's founding members plus a new Legion leader. Superboy guest stars.

Story .... **Paul Levitz**
Art .... **Lightle/Machlan**
Art/Cover .... **Lightle & Mahlstedt**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 4/1; newsstand o/s 4/24]

☐ WARLORD #107

Shakira is made an offer she can't refuse... she must sire a monster's brood.

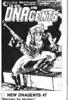
Story .... **Michael Fleisher**
Art .... **Ron Randall**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/17]

☐ WHO'S WHO #17

This issue is brought to you by the letters "N" and "O."

Text .... **Sanderson & Bridwell**
Art .... **Various**
Cover .... **Georg Perez**
[$1.00 newsstand color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/17]

ECLIPSE COMICS



© 1986 Mark Evanier & Mitch Schauer

☐ NEW DNAGENTS #7

"Passing for Human"

Introducing a new villain named Venimus, the man who taught Josef Mengele everything he knew. Plus a special Sham story by **Brian Murray** and **Willie Blyberg**.

Story .... **Mark Evanier**
Art .... **Schauer & Blyberg**
Cover .... **Schauer & Ordway**
[95¢ direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 3/25]

☐ LASER ERASER . . . AND PRESSBUTTON #5

"The Gates of Hell"

Mysta and Axel chase the leader of a heretical religious cult from world to world and in the process discover a horrific threat from outside the galaxy. Plus a First Empire story drawn by **John Ridgway**.

Story .... **"Pedro Henry"**
Art .... **Collins & Farmer**
[95¢ direct-sales mando color comic; ships 3/25]

☐ MIRACLEMAN #7

The first all-new issue. Liz has disappeared with Gargunza and the big question is whether Mike Moran can ever change into Miracleman again.

Story .... **Alan Moore**
Art .... **Chuck Beckum**
[95¢ direct-sales color Mando comic; ships 3/25]

☐ MISTER MONSTER'S THREE-DIMENSIONAL HI-OCTANE HORROR #1

Including work by **Ray Bradbury, Alex Toth, Tony Mortellaro, Mel Keefer**, and **Nick Viscardy** (a.k.a. Nick Cardy).

Cover .... **Alex Toth**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 2/18]

☐ THE TWISTED TALES OF BRUCE JONES #4

The fourth and concluding issue in this mini-series tribute to **Bruce Jones**.

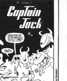
Story/Art .... **Bruce Jones**
[1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/18]

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

☐ CAPTAIN JACK #1

The Captain and his crew meet Beatniks from Outer Space, a planet of TV junkies, and more in this premiere outing. Introduction by **Don Simpson**.

All by .... **Mike Kazaleh**
[$2.00 direct-sales comic; ships in March]



© 1986 Mike Kazaleh

☐ CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT-TIDE

Featuring two stories by **Jan Strnad**: "Dragon Child," drawn by **Dennis Fujitake**, and "Goblin Child," drawn by **Tim Solliday**.

[$4.95 50-page direct-sales graphic novel; ships in March]

☐ MILTON CANIFF'S COMPLETE DICKIE DARE

Featuring the complete run of Milton Caniff's very first continuing strip, predating even *Terry and the Pirates*. Edited by **Rick Marschall**.

All by .... **Milton Caniff**
[$12.95 180-page direct-sales graphic album; ships in March]

☐ NEAT STUFF #4

Stories feature Junior (who gets a job at an ice cream shop), Girly-Girl (who tries to act nice), and the Bradley Brothers (who pull some pretty mean tricks).

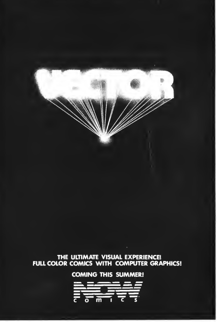
All by .... **Peter Bagge**
[$2.25 direct sales black-and-white comics magazine; ships in March]

FIRST COMICS

☐ AMERICAN FLAGG! #31

Starts a new Flagg adventure by the new creative team. Plus a Bob Violence story by **Steven Grant** and **Joe Staton**.

Story .... **Chaykin & Grant**
Art .... **Badger & Emberlin**
Cover .... **Mark Badger**
[$1.25 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 3/14]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FULL COLOR COMICS WITH COMPUTER GRAPHICS!
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COMICS

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☐ **DYNAMO JOE #3**
"Enemy."
Conclusion of the three-part series.
Script .... **John Ostrander**
Plot/Pencils/Cover .... **Doug Rice**
Inks .... **Nyberg & Thomas**
[$1.25 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 3/14]

☐ **HAWKMOON: JEWEL IN THE SKULL #2**
The second issue of a four-part adaptation of Michael Moorcock's first Hawkmoon novel.
Story .... **Gerry Conway**
Art .... **Rafael Kayanan**
[$1.75 direct-sales full-color comic; ships 3/21]

☐ **JON SABLE, FREELANCE #38**
All by .... **Mike Grell**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/21]

MARVEL COMICS

☐ **AVENGERS #269**
Continuing the Kang vs. Kang war.
Story .... **Roger Stern**
Art .... **J. Buscema & Palmer**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/18; newsstand o/s 4/9]

☐ **CONAN THE BARBARIAN #184**
Conan vs. (What's up) Meddoc
Story .... **Jim Owsley**
Art/Cover .... **John Buscema**
Inks .... **Ernie Chan**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/18; newsstand o/s 4/9]

☐ **DOCTOR WHO #22**
"The Stockbridge Horror" by **Steve Parkhouse**. "Skywatch" by **Max Stockbridge** and **Mick Austin.**
[$1.50 Baxter color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/16]

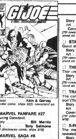
☐ **THE ETERNALS #10**
Walt Simonson takes over as writer.
Story .... **Walt Simonson**
Art .... **S. Buscema**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/18; newsstand o/s 4/9]

☐ **FANTASTIC FOUR #292**
Fury goes back in time to kill Hitler and the FF must stop him!
Story/Pencils/Cover **John Byrne**
Inks .... **P. Craig Russell**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **G.I. JOE #49**
Origin of the Cobra Emperor
Story .... **Larry Hama**
Art .... **Whigham & Mushynsky**
Cover .... **Mike Zeck**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/18; newsstand o/s 4/9]

☐ **INCREDIBLE HULK #321**
Bruce Banner continues his pursuit of the Hulk.
Story/Art/Cover .... **Al Milgrom**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/18; newsstand o/s 4/9]

☐ **IRON MAN #208**
Iron Man tries to prevent a South American coup.
Story .... **Denny O'Neil**
Art .... **Bright**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Cover .... **Akin & Garvey**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **MARVEL FANFARE #27**
Featuring Daredevil.
Story .... **Bill Mantlo**
Art .... **Tony Salmons**
[$1.50 direct-sales comic; ships 3/18]

☐ **MARVEL SAGA #8**
New art by **Walt** Simonson and **Al Milgrom**. The FF encounter Sub-Mariner, Iron Man's armor turns gold and other historical moments.
Text .... **Peter Sanderson**
Cover .... **Brent Anderson**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 3/18; newsstand o/s 4/9]

☐ **MARVEL TALES #188**
"From the Depths of Defeat" reprinted from *Spider-Man #49*.
Story .... **Stan Lee**
Art/Cover .... **Romita & Esposito**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/18; newsstand o/s 4/9]

☐ **MARVEL TEAM-UP INDEX #4**
Text .... **George Olshevsky**
[$1.25 newsstand color comic; ships 2/25; newsstand o/s 3/19]

☐ **PETER PARKER, SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #116**
A now-powerless Black Cat battles for her life.
Story .... **Peter David**
Art .... **Buckler & McLeod**
Cover .... **Rich Buckler**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **POWER MAN #124**
The penultimate issue of this title.
Story .... **Jim Owsley**
Art .... **Bright & Acerno**
Cover .... **Mike Zeck**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/18; newsstand o/s 4/9]

☐ **SECTAURS #7**
One of the ancient Hyves is discovered.
Story .... **Bill Mantlo**
Art .... **Geiger & Williams**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **SOLOMON KANE #6**
The last issue of this mini-series includes a 2-page poem by Robert E Howard.
Story .... **Ralph Macchio**
Art .... **Ridgway & Williamson**
Cover .... **Dan Green**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/11; newsstand o/s 4/5]

☐ **STAR WARS #106**
Guest stars: Zeltrons and Hiromi.
Story .... **Jo Duffy**
Art .... **Cindy Martin**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/11]

☐ **THOR #369**
Thor and Balder, locked in combat.
Story .... **Walt Simonson**
Art .... **Sal Buscema**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/11]

☐ **TRANSFORMERS #18**
The conclusion of "Return to Cybertron" (This time for sure.)
Story .... **Bob Budiansky**
Art .... **Perlin & Williams**
Cover .... **Herb Trimpe**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **X-FACTOR #6**
The master of the evil mutants is revealed.
Story .... **Bob Layton**
Art/Cover .... **Guice & Rubinstein**
[75¢ sales color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **X-MEN #207**
Rachel attacks Selene in the heart of the Hellfire Club.
Story .... **Chris Claremont**
Art .... **Romita, Jr. & Green**
Cover .... **John Romita, Jr.**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/18; newsstand o/s 4/9]

MARVEL EPIC COMICS

☐ **ELFQUEST #12**
Cutter and Skywise discover a mysterious forest.
Story .... **W. & R. Pini**
Art .... **Wendy Pini**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/16]

MARVEL STAR COMICS

☐ **CARE BEARS #5**
This issue ties in with the new Care Bears movie coming next year.
Story .... **Stan Kay**
Art .... **Post & Edelman**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/18; newsstand o/s 4/9]

☐ **MUPPET BABIES #8**
Gonzo helps Camilla realize the dream of her lifetime—a birthday party in Featherland.
Story .... **Stan Kay**
Art .... **Marie Severin**
[75¢ newsstand color comic; ships 3/25; newsstand o/s 4/16]

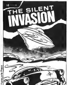
RENEGADE PRESS

☐ **MS. TREE #28**

More of Ms. Tree's problems in prison.
Story .... **Max Allan Collins**
Art/Cover .... **Terry Beatty**
[$1.70 black-and-white direct-sales comic; ships 3/21]

☐ **NEIL THE HORSE #14**
All by .... **Arn Saba**
[$1.70 two-tone direct-sales comic; ships 3/21]

☐ **normalman prequel**
Reprinting the earliest *normalman* tales from *Cerebus*, plus more.
All by .... **Valentino**
[$2.00 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/21]



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☐ **THE SILENT INVASION #1**
The premise of the odd, retro-50s SF series.
Story .... **Michael Cherkas**
Art .... **Larry Hancock**
[$1.70 direct-sales black-and-white comic; ships 3/21]

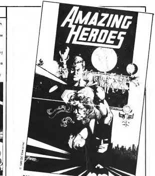
STEELDRAGON PRESS

☐ **CAPTAIN CONFEDERACY #1**
"The Making of a Hero"
Story .... **Will Shetterly**
Art .... **Vince Stone**
[$1.70 black-and-white direct-sales color comic; ships in March]

VORTEX COMICS

☐ **KELVIN MACE #3**
A new adventure of the man who has no business being anyone's role model.
Story/Art .... **Klaus Schoenefeld**
[$1.75 direct-sales full-color comic; ships in March]

☐ **MISTER X #7**
Continuing the exploits of the creator of Somnopolis.
Story .... **Dean Motter**
Art .... **Seth & Diamond**
Cover .... **Chaykin & Zahler**
[$1.75 direct-sales full-color comic; ships in March]



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NEXT ISSUE: A special double-size **Post-Crisis** extravaganza, with the following features: A **complete** George Perez-approved checklist of **all** the characters in **Crisis** (including the ones that were inked or colored wrong!); a complete set of obituaries for all the characters that died during the Crisis; interviews with **Marv Wolfman**, **George Perez**, **Jerry Ordway**, and **Roy Thomas** on the creation of the Crisis and its aftereffects; a day-by-day Crisis calendar; an article on the Charlton heroes that debuted during the Crisis; and a superb new **George Perez** cover! On sale two short weeks from now—if our Earth is still in existence by then!

WHAT KIND OF ALIEN IS YOUR NEIGHBOR?

WHAT KIND ARE YOU?

THE SILENT INVASION A Science Fiction Mystery
Coming in April from Renegade Press

Coming of

THE COMET MAN

Preview by Peter Quinones

Watch toward the Heavens. In this, Marvel's 25th anniversary year, we have been promised a new Universe. And surely this new universe will have a Halley's Comet crusing through it on its 76-year return cycle. Only this time, we will have the technology to get up close to this most famous of comets. And what happens when man approaches Halley's is the starting point for Marvel's new six-issue mini-series—*Comet Man*, scheduled to premiere the same time Halley's is brightest in sky, sometime in April.

The creators of this new book are new to the comic book world of writing, but they are longtime fans and collectors. Billy Mumy might be more familiar to most as the young Will Robinson of the 1960s TV science fiction program *Lost in Space*. He has written albums of music with various bands, and has scripted a number of TV shows. His co-creator is a longtime friend, Miguel Ferret who has collaborated with Mumy on television material and has directed for TV. Teamed up with former *Micronauts* penciler Kelley Jones, they have sought to create a book that has the taste and flavor of their favorite era in comics: the wartime Golden Age.

In December, the two writers flew from Southern California to its colder and wetter Northern part to meet with the artist. *Amazing Heroes* caught up with them as they were in the middle of the first issue.

How the Whole Thing Began

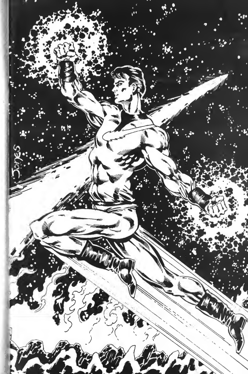
"It began with us, along with another friend, writing a *Twilight Zone* script," Billy Mumy explains. "It was called "The Coming of the Comet Man" and it had nothing to do with the comic bok character. It was an episode dealing with counterfeiting Golden Age books. And the book we picked was The Comet Man."

Then both Mumy and Miguel Ferrer attended the San Diego con. Mumy is a frequent speaker at comic conventions. "I ran into Jim Shooter and some friends I knew from Comico," Mumy recounts. "They asked what we had been doing, and we said we were writing TV scripts. And they said, 'great, you're writing, you should do some books.' Now, Miguel and I are collectors, and, well, maniacs about comics since around 1959, so the prospect of writing for them just went 'ping!' On the way back from the con we decided it had to be the Comet Man. And there has never really a Comet Man character, not one that has been fully developed."

Also, the fact that Halley's Comet was coming didn't hurt the sales pitch. But "the name came from the *Twilight Zone* script," Mumy says. "It wasn't till later that we realized, 'hey, there's this comet coming. Halley's on its way.'"

So the two got together and started throwing ideas around. The *Twilight Zone* script had been their first collaboration, but they found that they meshed perfectly. "I like to bounce ideas off of other people," Mumy confesses. "I tend to get things finished when I'm working with someone else. I'll get to a point in a song or an idea where I'll stall." Ferrer agrees. "I'm the same way. I'm pretty lazy unless I'm working with someone that'll push me. Besides, our points of reference are very similar. We've been friends for quite a while, plus we've both worked in the same industry. We know where we're coming from. We respect each other." It never even occurred to them that they would not do the comic together.

So they sent out the proposal and



got a quick response from both Comico and Marvel. Now the real work was going to begin. But they were not worried about what their collaboration would bring forth.

"We like the same things in comics," Mumy says.

And what they like is a certain style, a certain look. They are true collectors of books from The Golden Age. "I'd say between 1939 and 1943," Mumy says. They have been known to travel far and wide, braving three hours of Los Angeles commuter traffic, to find that certain book missing from their collections. "I don't think there's anything wrong with comics today. I mean, there's a lot of titles out there, more than ever before. It's just that a lot doesn't appeal to me the way the old titles do."

"And it's not the old morality or anything. It's just that certain look," Ferrer adds. "It's a detailed, but uncluttered look." It is a look that they want for their comic book. They have brought colored photostats of covers from the Golden Age to show Jones how to approach the covers. "We want the covers to look very different than what you see on the stands," says Ferrer. "And we're real happy with Kelley's stuff. When Marvel suggested Kelley, we looked real carefully at his *Micronauts*. It was a more complicated and cluttered look than we wanted. But we talked to him on the phone and he seemed to understand what we wanted. He's giving us what we want. Everything is so focused."

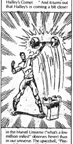
Kelley Jones has been the regular penciller on *The Micronauts* for the last three years until the book's recent cancellation. He has garnered a reputation for exciting, solid layouts and for meeting deadlines. His tenure on the *Micronauts* over, Jones was ready to take on a new challenging project. "Marvel sent me the script and I could see a great potential in the series," Jones says. "Besides, I would be out of the Microverse and could draw everyday things like refrigerators and crowded intersections. I loved doing Rann, Marionette and Bug, but I'm glad for the change. I mean, even though I draw the space shuttle in the first issue, I had to do research on it to make sure I did it right.*

"I had almost forgotten how to draw things from real life, like folds on a baggy blouse or a three-piece suit. Everyone in the *Micronauts* wore skintight costumes. And working with Bill and Miguel has been fun. They are intense about the project and they have a distinct vision as to what they want from the pencils. I'm being exposed to Golden Age stuff that is just great. I mean, I thought I was going back a ways since I date my influences back to Marvel's 1968 period, which I think produced some of the best comics of all time. But some of this early stuff is real exciting. So Bill and Miguel are making me stretch as an artist."

So now that the creative team was gathered, what were they going to do?

Comet Man: The Ultimate Man

When you put that question to Mumy, he pauses, and then in a mock serious radio announcer's voice begins his description, "Dr. Stephen Beckley, head of the Edmund project, is sent to investigate Halley's Comet . . ." And it turns out that Halley's is coming a bit closer in the Marvel Universe ("what's a few million miles?" observes Ferrer) than in our universe. The spacebell, "Firewatch," is manned by 35 year old Dr. Stephen Beckley, brilliant astronomer/astro-physicist. He and his wife, former astronaut Anne Beckley, are currently heads of the Edmund project: a joint effort between NASA and MIT to investigate Halley's Comet. Of course, the comet is more than just a spectacular fireball cruising the Milky Way.



"It's not a comet at all," Mumy says.

"It's an Oldsmobile," ever-helpful Miguel Ferrer interjects.

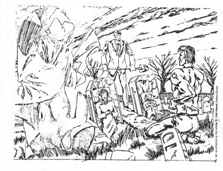
It's actually a spaceship and there is an accident. It is because of this accident and the nature of the alien race, that our shy scientist Beckley becomes something a bit more than human. "We don't want to give away some of the surprises we have in store," Mumy says. "Let's just say that something happens to our Dr. Beckley up there. So when he comes back, he's wearing different clothes. He's still wearing a flight suit. It's just not a NASA flight suit." And of course, that's not all that has been changed. Beckley is now the Comet Man.

As to his powers, "We'll discover them along with him," says Mumy. "It takes him awhile to discover all the things that he can do. He's very traumatized. He's not a hero type. He's a scientist, an innocent, a scholar. So now, he's receiving a lot more information through all his senses and that stuff is going to catch him off guard all the time. To offer an analogy, let's say there's a Russian copy of *War and Peace* on the table. Well, anyone of us has the potential to learn how to read it. We have to learn Russian first, etc. But it will take us a long time. Well, The Comet Man has had all the brakes taken off his brain. So he can learn countless things. But he doesn't know how to do these things yet. So he's going to learn. He's a child learning to walk, and he's going to stumble a few times." A few more hints on his powers: He can fly, has limited levitational powers over objects, has enhanced senses (on a par with Daredevil), some psychic abilities, the ability to transfer part of his consciousness into any living thing, the prerequisite great strength, and a nervous system that has developed new automatic reflexes. But they want to stress that the Comet Man will have very definite limitations. "He might have the potential to evaporate the Empire State Building, but he might not know how to take a punch," Ferrer says.

Well, he better be a fast learner, because the plots having him going up against the Hulk in one of the early issues. Also making guest appearances will be Reed Richards and Captain America. The action will begin in space, but will expand to include Florida, New York, and Europe. They have plotted it like a spy thriller, full of intrigue and double-crossings. There is a covert intelligence agency trying to seize the secrets of his newfound powers. This puts The Comet Man and his loved ones in great danger. "Everyone suffers in the book," Ferrer says. "But it's not all gloom and dismal. It's just that the world is a gray place. None of our characters are totally good or evil."

The book has been plotted for six issues, but the creative crew would like to see it turn into a series. "There are a hundred ways for it to go," Ferrer explains. "Even though the mini-series is a complete story in itself. Actually, each book can stand pretty much alone. But the more we get into this, the more ideas we get."

"Even though Bill and Miguel are new to comics," Jones says, "they've picked up the format real fast. They've come up with some real nice stuff. And they're constantly trying to



Art accompanying this article © 1986 Marvel Comics Group

improve the story. They have a lot of enthusiasm. Besides the main story, another thing I like is that they're trying to build up a fun cast of supporting characters. I think that's what made the early issues of *Spider-Man* somuch fun for me to read. There were all these other people in the hero's life, like Betty Brant and Flash Thompson, and they kept things interesting. A book has to be more than just superhero fighting supervillain. And I think our book has it."

Of course the obvious question most will ask of Mumy, is if his stint on *Lost in Space* contributed to his working on a science fiction series. "Well, I don't know," he explains. "I mean, I certainly enjoyed doing *Lost in Space* and *The Twilight Zone* episodes more than I did *The Virginian* episodes. But I consider *Lost in Space* complete fantasy. It wasn't science fiction. As far as science goes, I have no real background. But we did a lot of research for this series. Marvel sent us a whole packet of scientific theories about everything."

But he did come away with a lot from his early years of acting. "I was real lucky growing up working with the people I got to work with. People like Alfred Hitchcock, Rod Serling, Walt Disney, Jimmy Stewart, or whoever. I worked with some incredibly talented people. Writers, actors, directors. And those were the formative years of my life—the ages of five through 20. I was pretty busy and hopefully some of that stuff has rubbed off.

"There's nothing I'd rather do than write comics and make records. As far as acting goes, when I was young, there were more parts. But I'm 31 and there are a million guys my age who are trying for those parts. TV is too high-stress, anyway."

Ferrer feels their cinematic background is very similar to what is needed to write a good comic book. As a matter of fact, a look at their first story for the Comet Man goes from basic plotting to a full script similar to a movie script. "That's where we got our training," Ferrer says. "There, and from reading a million comic books over the years. And that's one of the exciting things of working with Kelley: that's how he wants to approach the book—cinematically. He talks in our terms: establishing shot, close-up, point-of-view and angles. And that's very much how we look at things—like a movie. There's not going to be much expository dialogue or things like that, which I hate. We're not going to be handing out explanations. Everything will be visible to the eye. We want panels that will stay with you, just like scenes from a movie do."

So, do they have plans to do any more writing for comics? "You bet," Mumy says. "we did a treatment for a four issue mini-series using the Golden Age Sandman, and we have another series proposal making the rounds at this moment. It's called The Company, and all we'll say about the book is that it concerns a company of actors in the 19th Century. We're real excited about this concept. But right now we're concentrating on doing the best possible job on *The Comet Man*. And the best way to know if we've succeeded is if everybody out there would write us letters and tells us what they liked or disliked about the book. Let us know. "Send us letters."

Next Stop . . . The Twilight Zone?

So soon, on your newstand, you will find a character that began life as a comic book hero in the Twilight Zone. If luck and the benevolent ratings has The New Twilight Zone back for another season, you might tune in and see a familiar comic book cover on your screen. "If they buy the script and put it on the air," Mumy says. "You can bet we're going to try to have this Comet Man be the book in the script. I think it'd be a real kick." ●

PETER QUINONES has written Against Blackshard: 3-D *for New* Sirius Comics.

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* *This interview took place before the recent tragedy involving the Space Shuttle.*

THE SILENT INVASION
A SCIENCE FICTION MYSTERY
THEY'RE HERE, PEGGY!! WE'VE GOT TO WARN EVERYONE!!
FORGET IT, MATT!! I REFUSE TO BELIEVE ANOTHER ONE OF YOUR DELUSIONS!!
THE SILENT INVASION
The Invasion Begins in April.
Coming from RENEGADE PRESS.

INTERVIEW

BRUCE JONES

Bruce Jones has been working in and out of comics for close to two decades. Active in all spheres—he's worked as a writer, artist, designer, editor, for Marvel, DC, Pacific, Eclipse, Warren, and more—he easily qualifies as one of the renaissance men of the field.

His earliest work, stories written and drawn in the late '60s and '70s, put him squarely in with the other artists of that generation who worshiped EC Comics (especially Williamson and Frazetta); in the mid-'70s, he became one of Warren's most prolific writers, producing countless horror stories for Creepy *and* Eerie, *including the classic, Berni Wrightson-illustrated "Jennifer." In the '80s, he kept himself occupied by scripting comics for DC and Marvel (most noticeably his idiosyncratic revival of* Ka-Zar*); he then moved to Pacific Comics, at the time a thriving publisher, for whom he produced a whole raft of titles, writing and editing (often in collaboration with his wife April Campbell) most of them himself:* Alien Worlds, Twisted Tales, Somerset Holmes, *and* Silverheels. *When Pacific Comics went under, Bruce, eager to move on, turned down an offer from Eclipse to continue his successful titles there in favor of devoting himself to a career as a Hollywood screenwriter. In addition to working on a screenplay for a* Somerset Holmes *movie, he is one of the main writers behind HBO's horror series* The Hitchhiker.

With Eclipse's four-issue retrospective of Bruce's work, The Twisted Tales of Bruce Jones, *scheduled to appear during the Spring, this seemed like an excellent time to talk to Bruce about his eccentric career in comics.*

This interview was conducted, transcribed, and edited in early February by

—KIM THOMPSON

AMAZING HEROES: *Tell me about your working relationship with April. It's always puzzled me how two writers can collaborate. How does that work?*

BRUCE JONES: Works pretty well. I'd never done it before, and I didn't think it would, but it's worked great. April's been an absolute inspiration. She has the capacity for things that I don't and, conversely, I think I'm good at things that she *may* not be quite as good at. We're really a perfect *match*. It's worked out great in all the areas, in television and movies, but also in comics.

AH: *How would you differentiate her strengths from your strengths?*

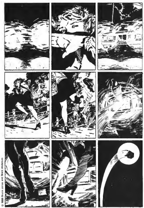
JONES: Well, she has a terrific business mind, *much* better than I do. I'm terrible at that, or at least I was; I'm getting better at it. I've learned a lot, mostly through her, about how to handle myself in a business situation. The freedom that I enjoyed at Pacific was largely due to April, because I would probably just have ended up working for them. As it turned out, I was really working for myself. I was a separate company that was using Pacific as a publishing house, which gave *me* the absolute control that made the books, for better or worse, *mine*. That was great. And she's been indispensible in Hollywood because Hollywood is a political and business-oriented town, not an artistic-oriented town. She really held me up there.

But she is also, in terms of creating, a fine writer. Specific strengths—don't know, I *may* be better at dialogue and she *may* be better at plotting . . . and that's not strictly true. She's terrific at dialogue and I can plot too.

"[At Pacific], I was really working for myself. I was a separate company that was using Pacific as a publishing house."

AH: *So, in comics, for instance, does one of you do a rough draft and the other polish it up?*

JONES: Well, with *Twisted Tales* and *Alien Worlds*, she pretty much left me alone, because it's something that I had wanted to do so badly that when it was thrown into my lap, I knew everything that I wanted to


© 1986 Bruce Jones and Brent Anderson

SOMERSET HOLMES: Exposition through pictures rather than words.

do—just ran with it. When it came to *Somerset Holmes* and the other titles, there was a lot more input.

AH: *On* Somerset, *for instance, would the three of you—you, April and [artist] Brent Anderson—have plot conferences?*

JONES: Yeah. Well, Brent and April and I developed the concept and plotted the first issue together, and then April and I pretty much took it from there. I did most of the physical writing but a lot of the brainstorming was April's. That's pretty much the way it works in movies and TV too.

AH: *Do you ever miss drawing? Eclipse just released the first of four issues of* Twisted Tales of Bruce Jones, *reprinting stuff you wrote and drew. So you did do a lot of work at one point.*

JONES: Yeah, through the years. I mean, I'm 41 years old, and I started in 1968, so if I only drew once every month and a half there would be enough material for something. Incidentally, there's a story that Eclipse refused to run—I don't know if you'd want to run it either [*laughs*]—that was too sexy for them, even though there is no nudity in it, so I'll let you imagine it. It's never been printed, so that might be interesting. Maybe you can print the page and take out the offending panels.

AH: *Good lord. After seeing some of the stuff they've run, I've got to wonder. . . .*

JONES: Well, it was mostly implied. Actually, I thought it was done pretty tastefully. I substituted something else for them to run.

AH: *Collating all the reprint material for* Twisted Tales of Bruce Jones, *didn't you want to sit down at the drawing board again?*

JONES: Oh, most of it was just horrendous. I cringe when I look at it. I couldn't imagine why Eclipse wanted it. Occasionally there was a job that I thought had some thought behind it. Artists are always hardest on their own work. I remember looking through it and I can see myself going through different phases, being inspired by different artists.

AH: *Which artists were your inspirations?*

JONES: In the beginning, I guess, the same ones that inspired everyone else—Frazetta, people like that. Al Williamson was a great inspiration. I'd gotten into Hal Foster very heavily, and thought that was the way to do it, and finally sort of got around to my own style.

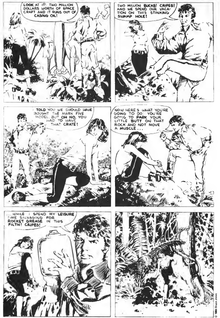
I was always a lot more interested in telling a story than in the drawing. Comic books was only another way of telling a story. I wasn't really that much concerned with the artwork. I realized it had to be good enough that people weren't going to laugh at it, but that wasn't the main thing. And I think that is the opposite of the way that 95 per cent of the artists who are drawing comics feel. Not all of them—I think Frank Miller is very concerned with the story, there's a good example of a writer-artist—but most of them simply aren't, and that's one of the things that made *Twisted Tales* so difficult. Because the artists *just simply don't care*. The only thing they care about is the artwork. And beyond that, the only thing they care about is their own artwork, and in many cases that makes them terrific artists, but it makes them extremely difficult to work with. They have no sense of cohesion, or continuity; the only thing that's important to them is how the story looks—not even how the story looks but how the panel looks, or not even the panel but the guy's pant leg, and that makes it real hard to get issues out on time. It makes you appreciate what a Jim Shooter or an Archie Goodwin goes through and why he and—think of an artist, any artist—are constantly at odds with each other. They're living in two different worlds.

That's one of my main beefs with the comic book business today: the art doesn't tell the story. I think mostly that's the fault not of the artists and writers but the people who buy them. I think comic books are largely the way they look because of the people who are buying them.

AH: *Comic books are like the government . . . people get the comics they deserve?*

JONES: It's a children's market and children want super-heroes and they want a certain kind of super-hero and that's what sells. Because it's a small industry, an industry that absolutely must depend on a certain amount of cash flow, they absolutely must sell to children. That's unfortunate, it makes it hard for an alternative market.

AH: *Who would you say is a good storyteller, an artist who thinks of the story?*


LOOK AT IT! TWO MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF SPACE CRAFT AND IT RUNS OUT OF CASING OIL!
TWO MILLION BUCKS! CRIPES! AND WE SPEND OUR VACATION ON THIS STINKING SWAMP HOLE!
I TOLD YOU WE SHOULD HAVE BOUGHT THE MARK FIVE MODEL, BUT OH NO, YOU HAD TO HAVE THAT CRATE!
NOW HERE'S WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO! YOU'RE GOING TO PARK YOUR LITTLE BUTT ON THAT ROCK AND NOT MOVE A MUSCLE . . .
. . . WHILE I SPEND MY LEISURE TIME SALVAGING FOR ROCKET GREASE IN THIS FILTH! CRIPES!
© 1986 Bruce Jones

One page (a printable one) from the Jones story that was nixed by Eclipse for TWISTED TALES.

JONES: I mentioned Frank Miller before. I'm so far out of it that I don't know. I never read comics, I never look at them, and I don't mean this in any kind of elitist way. I don't live somewhere where there are comic books. There are no comic book stores. Very occasionally, when I go to a 7-11, I see them. So they're not in my system the way they used to be. When I worked at Pacific I used to see them constantly because they were a distributor as well as a publisher and I would go over to their warehouse and be inundated with comic books. I have absolutely no idea what the field is doing now or where it's going.

But my interest was always peripheral, and it always seemed to be at odds with what the industry became after about 1963. After Marvel really got rolling again in the early '60s my interest in comics waned considerably, and that was exactly the time that I started getting into them. It's really madness; I have absolutely no idea why I did that, except . . . it's a terrible thing to say, I suppose, but it was to make money. It was a terrific and very easy way to make money to sustain myself.

AH: *You're a different generation than most of the people who are currently successful in the industry—or indeed, in a way, many of your contemporaries.*

JONES: That's true. I grew up on '50s comics, and 90 per cent of the people that I knew grew up on '60s comics. And they were just not the same. Comics today are really Marvel. When I was a kid Marvel was Timely, and Timely was always only one part of the market. There were so many more publishers, so many more ideas, so many more attitudes, so many more feelings. And that was an exciting time for comics. It all seems the same now. It all seems to be dominated by Marvel's attitude—and that's not to say anything particularly good or particularly bad about Marvel, Marvel just has its attitude like any publishing company. EC had an attitude. You either like it or you don't, it's really moot, but the point is, when there's only one attitude, that's what comics become. And that just shows how terribly the readership has shrunk. So all the kids growing up today read Marvel, and they all want to read about superheroes in costumes and it has all slid back to that age level. And I think it's really bad for the market.

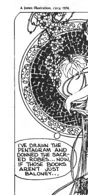
AH: *You worked for Marvel for a while, on Ka-Zar. How do you look back on that experience? Did you have to push yourself in a certain mindset to work on it?*

JONES: Well, it was a shock after Warren, because you're very aware of Marvel's presence, the Marvel mentality. And I don't mean that necessarily in a bad sense; I think there are people who thrive on it. But I've always been very editorially-minded, and I've always had a very strong sense of editonal content and, not only the way a story should go, but the way that I think a magazine or a comic book should *look*. I respect Marvel's look but I don't agree with it. It isn't something I would do. It is primarily a super-hero outfit, and I have no interest at all in super-heroes. To a lesser or greater extent everything that Marvel turned out then—and now—including *Ka-Zar*—is influenced by the super-hero. It seeps through the woodwork, somehow. It's always there. And Jim Shooter's *presence* is always present to a greater or lesser extent. That's as good or bad as the individual who's working on it; as I said, there are artists who thrive on that, who grew up on *Spider-Man*, and Jack Kirby, who wouldn't have it any other way.

I didn't grow up on those people. I was 15 or 16 years old when *Spider-Man* came out, and at that point in my life girls were a lot more important than comic books (in fact they had already been several years before that). So I can remember, as a 15-year-old, seeing those old Marvel Comics that are now revered by collectors and saying, "This is awful stuff. It's not as intelligent as the comics I used to read." Those issues, that are indeed worth hundreds or thousands of dollars. I can remember picking up at the corner drugstore and putting back and saying, "Ugh, it's just pandering to the lowest form of mentality." I'm a little less hard on them now. But at the time I remember thinking, especially in comparison with the EC line, they were just insulting.

I think that you experience certain things in your younger years and you're flush with them and that influences you and inspires you to go on. I missed that with Marvel. I never got caught up in the Merry Marvel Marching Syndrome. But you need that today to be inspired.

A Jones illustration, circa 1974.


I'VE DRAWN THE PENTAGRAM AND DONNED THE SACRED ROBES... NOW, IF THOSE BOOKS AREN'T JUST BALONEY...

© 1986 Bruce Jones

I think if you're going to enjoy working in the field today you'd better like Marvel Comics. You'd better agree with their way of doing things or you're against a great wall. And I've come up against that wall repeatedly.

AH: *Isn't Ka-Zar the continuing character you've worked the longest with? You haven't really worked with a lot of continuing characters . . .*

JONES: No, I never had much interest in doing it, although conversely, it's really much easier to write that stuff. Once I started working for Marvel, once I started doing *Ka-Zar*, I was *floored* at how much easier it was. It's the simplest thing to take a familiar character and just lead him through a series of adventures. It's like a soap opera on Wednesday afternoon television, because it's all there—the characters, their backgrounds, everything. You're familiar with it, the readers are familiar with it, and they can pretty much do anything. As long as they seem to act as the same character, people will accept the flimsiest of plots . . .

AH: *And of course you have the most amazing backlog of supporting characters you can pitch in if the going gets tough.*

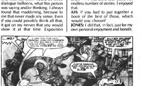
JONES: Yeah, and that's been another of my gripes with comics. They depend more on the strengths of the characters than on the strengths of a fresh plot.

AH: *How much grief did you get for taking the Ka-Zar character and changing his personality, with no explanation at all . . .*

JONES: Oh, I got no grief at all, because at that point, I don't think anyone cared about the character. They left me alone and let me do whatever I wanted to do. The revival was strictly a merchandising situation. There wasn't a substantial character there to begin with; he was a poor man's Tarzan, he just grunted, "Ka-Zar strong like bull," and that kind of terrific dialogue. It was pretty blah. That was the beauty of working on the project—I got very little interference because no one cared. If people had cared a lot there would have been a lot more interference.

Even at that, it was a departure from working at Warren, where 98% of everything I wrote was accepted as is. There was a lot more editorial interference at Marvel than I was used to. I guess I was a real prima donna. I was used to being able to just do anything I wanted and have it accepted; I had to learn the Marvel mold. And I'm not knocking it—I think that's as it should be. If you're going to work for a company that is obviously extremely successful, you *should* learn to do what they think is important. But it was hard because I wasn't used to it.

They would do things occasionally that I thought didn't help the story. I was primarily concerned with the story and they were primarily concerned with continuity. And they were always very very anxious to explain everything that had happened in the issue before, and to explain through lengthy dialogue or captions why a person was doing something at a particular time. Characters were always talking to themselves, which really got on my nerves. There would be a piece of action where someone would be, let's say, jumping off a cliff onto the back of someone riding a horse, doing a double flip and pulling their knife out at the same time and striking that person on the back of the neck and tumbling to the ground and recovering. And during what would be a two-and-a-half second interval, there would be three dialogue balloons, what this person was saying and/or thinking. I always found that maddening, because to me that never made any sense. Even if you could possibly think all that, it got on my nerves that you would show it at that time. Exposition through dialogue and even captions was always a nagging grief of mine at Marvel. I thought they did much too much of that. But I know why they did it: because they sold their product to younger readers, who needed that constant re-establishing.



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“Exposition through dialogue and even captions was always a nagging grief of mine at Marvel.”

Also, I wanted to tell the story through pictures and through a different kind of dialogue and that was curtailed to a certain extent.

AH: *You got that out of your system with* Somerset Holmes, *though, didn't you?*

JONES: Yeah, I did (*laughs*). That made up for a lot. But it was a different situation. [*On Ka-Zar*], I was working for Marvel, and I tried to do the best job that I could for them. I never really got any personal grief. My working relationship with Marvel was always very good. Jim Shooter always treated me very well. I always had a good relationship with Louise Jones. From that standpoint it wasn't too bad. *Most of my griefs were with the Marvel way of doing things, not with anybody personally.*

AH: *How many stories did you do for Warren over the years?*

JONES: I have no idea. It seems like dozens and dozens and dozens. Not all of which got printed. I don't know . . . I was there four years. An endless number of stories. I enjoyed that.

AH: *If you had to put together a book of the best of those, which would you choose?*

JONES: I *did* that, in fact, just for my own personal enjoyment and benefit. I had all the issues from the time I started working there, and I went through and tore out what I thought were my best stories, and then tossed the rest of them. I wish I'd pulled them all out, because there were good ideas there I could have used for TV and the movies, but you never think of that.

The problem with answering that question is that often what ends up being the best story that you wrote doesn't end up appearing as the best story, and that's the real problem with comics. It's been said before and it will be said again, but a writer is really only as good as the artist who's interpreting the story. Sometimes the story can actually turn out better than it should because it looks so good that you forgive some of the bad writing. But more often that's not the case, and you get saddled with a not-so-good artist. I can remember feeling that very strongly when I was going through those issues and tearing stories out. There were stories that I really liked but the drawing was just so dreadful that I thought, "I don't want to keep that because it's so unpleasant to look at." And I can remember asking friends of mine who were reading the stories I had written in those days about a particular story, and they would say, "Yeah, but I didn't want to look at it because the art was so awful that it turned me off." I think they're justified in saying that, but when you're writing you don't think about this. All the writer's concerned with is him and the typewriter and the concept and it always looks great to the writer. You know when you've done a good job and you know when you've done a bad job. But when you've put your heart and your soul into something and it's worked out real well—in your mind at least—and you hand that in, to you it's finished and done; it'll always be a great story because it's up there in your head, and it can be a real shock getting it back. It's always a shock, because it never turns out the way you saw it. Sometimes it's a pleasant shock, when you get a Richard Corben or someone like that; sometimes he'll think of things you didn't and it can really add to the story. But most of the time it's very disappointing.

And I think that's the beef that screenwriters and comic book writers have most in common: that it *never* appears the way they saw it. Well, of course, how can it?

AH: *Unless you've been working with the same guy for 30 years.*

> **"Art directing is something that is sorely needed in this business."**

JONES: Yeah, and even when you get to know someone, it doesn't really. Most of the time it doesn't turn out very well. I think most comic book writers and screenplay writers are very frustrated with their jobs. Even if a comic book artist gets a lousy story, let's face it, most of the people who buy comic books are not buying them to read them, they're buying them for the artwork. The comic book writers all know that and they all hate it. Even the ones who are making the most money and who are supposedly the most popular really, in their hearts, they know that they're not needed. People are either buying it for the art or they're buying it for the ambience. They're not buying it because it's well-written.

The strictures are so enormous in comic book writing that it's very hard to write something well to begin with, but even when you do that, it's almost never appreciated. I don't think that's true of the artwork. Artwork is always talked about. Comic books is an art medium and I think motion pictures is an actor's and a director's medium. Indeed, the motion picture script is nothing more than a blueprint. The changes that go into a motion picture script are tenfold what they are with a comic book script. Most of the time at least your general intent gets across in a comic book story, which is not necessarily the case in a television or motion picture story. They can murder it; it's amazing. They get torn to pieces. Sometimes for the best, but mostly not.

It's hard to take it all in perspective and to appreciate where everyone is coming from. For instance, if you write a motion picture script and you give it to Meryl Streep and Meryl Streep gets down to line four, page seven, and simply can't say that line, I think she has a right to change it, because she's not going to say it well and the picture is going to suffer. From the same standpoint, if you've diagrammed a particular scene and the director, for some reason can't see it and you're not on the set and can't *make* him see it, chances are you're better off having him shoot it the way he sees it because at least the way he sees it will be cohesive, will have an attitude. Whereas if he tries to shoot something that he doesn't understand but is exactly the way you wrote it he'll probably blow it. There's that constant give-and-take in motion pictures and television that you feel less of in the comics field although you do feel some of it.

But the frustrations for the writers in both of those fields are just enormous. I would be willing to bet that any writer in the field—*any* writer in the field—would agree. All the writers feel like the underdogs. I think the only writers in the writing business who really feel a sense of satisfaction are the novelists, and they're not free and clear of it. They get it from their editors all the time. I can't remember the title of a particular book, I believe it was a Hemingway novel, but it was a very famous book that had whole chapters cut out of it. I remember listening to an interview with the editor who did it—he was a very good editor, by the way, one of the Robert Gottliebs of New York, and he was probably right in doing it. At that time Hemingway was not a name, but I remember during the interview him saying that now, knowing what Hemingway has become, he would be a little nervous about taking those kinds of liberties with the book. But even at that I think the novelists, at least for the most part, have published what they wanted to say and find a bit more satisfaction.

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I just hope your readers aren't getting bored. I don't think the average comic book reader will find me interesting.

AH: *I think this is interesting, so. . . .*

JONES: So the *hell* with 'em! Right? (*Laughs*)

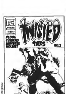
AH: *Yeah! That's the great thing about being a publisher.*

JONES: Yeah. That's true. I guess you have carte blanche.

AH: *Publisher/Editor. Now if I could just get rid of the art director. . .*

JONES: Art directing is something that is sorely needed in this business. I try to be very conscious of it. I always tried to give our books a look. Whether it was a good look or a bad look or a look someone agreed or disagreed with, at least it had a look. That was always very important to me.

Another one of my beefs with the comics business at large is that either the comic books being produced just didn't *have* a look, they were just a hodge-podge—God, your eye just went everywhere, you couldn't settle on anything, a blurb here and a fist here and a swath of color here—or it had a look that was so disgusting that you didn't particularly *want* to get inside. Often they were *exciting* in a sort of childish way, but esthetically it just wasn't there.



© 1986 Berni Wrightson

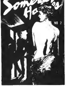
It was very hard to do given the proclivities of the average comic book artist and the average comic book reader, but I always tried to give the Pacific books a house look. Not just stand out of the racks so people would pick them up instead of something else. I got this from Hugh Hefner, who once said that a magazine should be like an old friend: it should be immediately recognizable and you should be very comfortable with it but it should also be inspiring and there should always be a little nook or cranny of newness in there. That's what I strove for and it's not something I always succeeded at.

It always rankled me a little bit when people accused me of copying EC, because not only esthetically would I not try to do that, but it would have been madness to try. I don't think anyone could ever have topped EC at its own game. Every one of those artists, almost without exception, was a genius, and Feldstein's style was so distinctive . . . I did try to capture some of the flavor of that time, and EC was such a big part of that time that naturally some of the work rubbed off, but I never consciously tried to imitate them.

Whereas I may have been influenced by it, I think I was much more influenced by short story writers and novelists like Richard Matheson and Charles Beaumont and Ernest Hemingway and John Buell, than I ever was by anybody in comics.

AH: *I've heard it suggested that one of the reasons Pacific failed is that they didn't have a consistent identity, but rather three or four conflicting identities. Your books had a very specific identity and look, others' books were different. You'd pick up a Pacific Comic—and I think this is true of Eclipse now as well—and you'd have no idea what to expect.*

JONES: I think you're absolutely right, and the chief problem with that is a lack of art direction. That's always the case. Good art directors are hard to come by. I hate to say it this way, but most people who are good at it aren't going to waste their time in comic books, because the pay isn't good. They go on to slick magazines. There aren't many Arthur Pauls in the comic book business. It's too bad because that only adds to the childish and amateurish look. There are good minds in the comic book field, I think, there are intelligent people, there are some good storytellers, there are some wonderful artists, there are some good writers, and all of them are suffering under this umbrella of bad art direction, this incohesive look—coupled with the fact that a comic book in and of itself has such a stigma against it. Throw any magazine down on a coffee table in any given living room and it elicits one kind of response; throw any comic book—I don't care what kind or where it comes from—next to that, and it immediately elicits another kind of response, namely thumbs down. And that's not fair, because I think comics can be an artform. I think it *is* an artform and it can rise to that level. But, boy, it gets tougher and tougher as the years go by, it really does.



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AH: *When you entered into the motion picture and television business, was there a stigma attached to your working in comics for so long?*

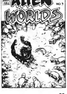
JONES: No, it's amazing how many people in the movie industry . . . In some cases I would walk in and, believe it or not, there would be comic books on their desks.

AH: *Having seen some recent movies, I can believe it. Wasn't it also Bill Goldman who made a point about "comic-book movies"?*

JONES: That's true too, but when you think about it, it isn't as amazing as it may at first seem, because they're both visual media. April and I got into the motion picture business through the comic book business, because of *Somerset Holmes*. A director read *Somerset Holmes* and saw it as a movie and took it to a producer who immediately saw it as a movie and I got into the business because I was asked to write the screenplay. And I think they overlap—at least on the surface. When it comes down to the actual business, and especially when it comes down to the patrons of those two art forms, I think that's where the distinction is. The motion picture and television business is vastly more open to a creative mind than the comic book business because it's not strictly a children's business—although the motion picture business is in real danger of becoming one. Every year that goes by it seems that the adult audience shrinks and the children's—teenager's—audience in the theatrical business grows.

But see, conversely, the adult audience for television (and I'm also speaking of cable television) and video cassettes grows. So the motion picture business is going through a real dichotomy right now of shrinking the theatrical audiences and growing the cable videocassette audiences. They don't know what to do next, I think (*laughs*).

The danger is that you get trapped into what they used to call high-concept movies, where they do turn into comic books and you're doing things like pushing people out of windows and having car wrecks and doing exploitive things, particularly in the field of blood-letting—visceral things, just because the medium has an immediate visual flash, a kind of ingrained response that you can count on at the box office. That's the other side of the



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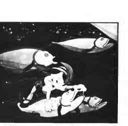
coin, that's the bad side of the spectrum. The good side is that it's a challenge to write motion pictures that are both intelligent and visually engaging.

That's a real challenge and it's harder to do now than it's ever been, because there's so much to be seen on television, to the extent that what you're watcing in the theatre is going to be on the bloody television! It used to be a year; now it's six months, sometimes, three, two months. I'll turn on HBO and I'll look at April and think, my God, weren't we watching that down at the mall last week? It's really incredible. And now they've got to the point where they're releasing cassettes in tandem with motion pictures. It's a wild time. It's the best of times, it's the worst of times, because you're really in competition with yourself. But I like to think of it as a challenge.

I remember something Steven Spielberg said in an interview that to a large degree I agree with. There are a lot of positive things that have come out of the cable and videocassette industry, and there are a lot of very negative things, but the worst thing is that the specialness of movies is gone. When I was a kid, movies used to be an event. If you wanted to see a movie, you either had to go to your local motion picture house—and you bloody better well be there on time, or you missed it—or you had to sit down in front of the television—in which case you *still* had to be there on time or you missed it. That put a different perspective on it and made it an event. There's something that sticks in my craw about being able to go down to a video store and buy a movie like a bloody rutabaga. And what it has done is that it's taken the specialness out of the motion picture medium.

I've experienced this with my eight-year-old stepdaughter. We recently subscribed to the Disney channel and they show a lot of dreck on the Disney channel. They *do* show some good things; the problem is that my stepdaughter can't discern and sift through the good things for the bad things very well. She's an exceptionally bright child, so it's therefore not her fault, but she's bombarded by so much now and it's so accessible and it's so easy for her to slap in a cassette or twist the dial that I think she's missing something. I think we all are.

In one sense cable has saved the industry and in a very good sense it has retrieved what were virtually missing films, films that might have been lost to posterity. Because the motion picture industry by and large doesn't care about art. They're willing to lose movies, except for perennial favorites like *Gone With the Wind*. They'll watch the negatives on those films and keep them in good shape, but a lot of great movies get damaged and lost in time. The video market has opened up a whole new world of caring about motion pictures and putting those things on cassettes and establishing a library-like attitude and feeling. So there's that side of it.



© 1986 Walt Disney Productions

From Walt Disney's PINOCCHIO, now available on videocassette: an "offensive" move on the Disney organization's part, says Jones.

I think in the long run it's done more good than harm, but we lost something very special. Like everybody else in town, I aspire to being a director. I must tell you, though, that there isn't the specialness about that that there used to be. I'm finally a screenwriter now, something I always wanted to do, and there isn't the specialness about that that there used to be. And, you know, it's the only field that was never that way until recently. You could reproduce novels, you could reproduce magazine articles, you could reproduce comic books, anything that's in the printed form you can reproduce. *Movies* were never up for sale. And now you can buy them and not only see them anytime you want, you can see them as many times as you want.

AH: *You can go cut them apart and watch individual scenes.*

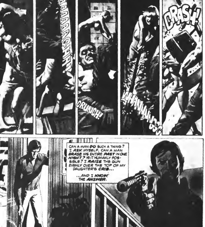
JONES: That's exactly right, and to me the most offensive example of that, and something I dreaded to see and something I'll still contend until the day I go to my grave was a major mistake was when the Disney organization in its infinite wisdom committed a *classic* like *Pinocchio* to videotape, which means that any six-year-old kid can drag his dad down to a videostore now and not only *rent* it but bloody well *buy* it, bring it home and stick it on a shelf and say, "It's four o'clock in the afternoon, dad, put on *Pinocchio*!" I think that's just such a terrible thing to do to all those wonderful artists and technicians who did so much work on those wonderful, at least the first five, classics the Disney organization turned out. They were wonderful films; they should be special. And I'm sure they'll continue to do it. I'm sure *Bambi* or *Fantasia* will be next and I think that's just such a massive mistake, because so far every time they've done that they've pulled them from theatrical release and I hope that trend stops. It probably won't. Videocassettes are the wave of the future, so I'm a dinosaur and I'm talking about the past and that isn't the way you think, because the powers that be always go where the most money is, and the most money right now is in videocassettes. But I hate to see it happen. I'm about to have a baby, and I hope that when my child is six or seven years old, or at that time when I first saw those movies, I hope I'll be able to take her to a *Bambi* or a *Snow White* and she'll be able to see it as a cinematic experience, not as a television convenience.

I know we're way off the mark here and you're bored. I think my mind has gone so far away from comics and has immersed itself so much in the movie and TV industry that I probably have an instinct to go in that direction, so you'll have to lure me back to comics. I don't mind talking about comics, I just have a limited knowledge of them. What else can I gas about and bore everyone with?

AH: *Well, you won't tell me what your favorite stories are, so I guess that's out.*

JONES: Well, yeah, I guess I could. For Warren, I like the things I did with Richard Corben and Russ Heath. I always thought Russ Heath was a marvelous artist and a good storyteller and a terrific technician, and he was the one guy I regret not having been able to get for *Twisted Tales* and *Alien Worlds*. I wanted him so much and called him repeatedly but he got himself into a situation where he was committed to other projects. I regret that. I wanted him and I wanted artists like him, people who could tell stories. They were so hard to find.

"For Warren, I like the things I did with Richard Corben and Russ Heath."



© 1986 Warren Publishing

AAAAAAAAGHH!
CRUNCH!
WHANNNNGGG
CRASH!
CAN A MAN DO SUCH A THING? I ASK MYSELF. CAN A MAN ERASE HIS ENTIRE PAST IN ONE NIGHT? IS IT HUMANLY POSSIBLE? I RAISE THE GUN EVENLY OVER THE TOP OF MY DAUGHTER'S CRIB...
...AND I KNOW THE ANSWER.

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Forgive me, but there are so many prima donnas in the field, there really are. Not only don't they care about the way the story looks, but they have no feeling for the look of a book as a whole. I suppose you can't really blame them for that, in a sense.

I always got the feeling, though, that the artists who worked for EC, for instance, *seemed* at least to care about the line, seemed to think of EC as a family. Most of them worked for all the titles, which would be incentive enough, I suppose, but that was the most marvelous thing about EC. Also, Feldstein was a terrific designer, and he was designing those books. And so was Kurtzman.

AH: *Everything was pre-designed because of the way they worked.*

JONES: Yeah, that's right. But people complain about that: "EC books look all alike, blablabla." They're right there is a sameness, and, yes, issue after issue after issue, especially if you read the Cochran collections, there is a redundancy to it that to some degree gets on your nerves. But I think the extent to which it gets on your nerves is more than offset by the cohesive look—you *always* knew what to expect from an EC, and while there is a bad side to that, there is a very good side to it.

AH: *And you still had distinct work—as editors, you had Feldstein, but also Kurtzman, Craig . . . They were consistent but not identical.*

JONES: Now *that* was the part of EC I would have liked to have been able to implement. That I would have gladly copied, because that was not copying a style, that was copying an attitude. I tried to copy EC to that extent, the same way I tried to copy, believe it or not, *Playboy*, which had an art director and a look I very much admired, although I didn't particularly agree with the content.

But gosh, Kim, it was tough to do. You have no idea. I was working with absolutely no help from anyone, except of course April.

AH: *I have some idea (laughs).*

JONES: Yeah, you probably do. Of course, you're in the business. The people who are working in the business, their ideas are so disparate from yours and no one cares. It produces some great work, but there is such a feeling of individuality in the field now, that's why we get this shotgun effect, this scattershot look—it's diversification overkill. And I think it hurts the industry terribly. It makes it look sloppy, it makes it look like it has no editorial feel at all. I think there are some good, intelligent editors in the business today, but they don't get a real chance to ply their craft because they take such flak from the artists. The artists are—oh, God, they're just *maddening!* They're unbelievably frustrating. They're all paranoid, they're all worried about money—and I think I can speak with justification, having been one. I started in the field as an artist, I *know* what it's like to be on both sides of the fence. And they're at absolute odds with each other. The left hand does not know what the right hand is doing and they have to be like this (*clasps hands*) to make a cohesive issue. There's more to it than just the way a word is written, the way a cape is drawn, the way a particular color is put down, the way a cover looks—for a comic book to work, or a movie to work, it all has to work together, and of all the books down the line, I think EC did that better than anyone.

But I want to state emphatically that I did not at any time try to consciously copy that line. I don't think *Twisted Tales* was like EC. I will say that I did consciously try to shock. I was trying to elicit with *Twisted Tales* the kind of feeling that I experienced as a child, which was that the EC books, and not just the EC books, the horror comics in general in those days, were like forbidden fruit. You know what I mean? And that was a very exciting feeling. You knew you weren't supposed to be looking at it, but there was a great thrill in looking at it. I tried to do in the '70s and the '80s what those books did in the '50s, and of course we've come a long way and you can't just show a walking corpse coming down the road. We tried to do it to some degree with sex and to some degree with violence, but more than that, I think, with content. I deliberately tried to disturb. It may be true that I overstepped myself at times but it was never for shock's sake alone. I tried to do it to establish an attitude. Sometimes I think I was very successful, with stories like "Banjo Lessons." Sometimes, whether it was my fault or whether it was the artist's fault, I just wasn't successful at all, and some of the stories ended up looking exploitative, which I think was unfortunate. I *never* wanted that. We tended to do that less in *Alien Worlds*, and so some people think *Alien Worlds* was a superior book. I think that in terms of taking chances, and being radical, *Twisted Tales* was a better book.

I'm proud of the books for the most part. But it is very hard to take chances and to do stories where you feel like you're stretching yourself, particularly when you're working with an artist who simply doesn't understand what you're going for. I don't want to name names.

I don't want to get into this either, but that's my chief beef with the *Comics Journal*. *The Comics Journal*, I'm sure, probably does a lot of good, but the one thing that it does that is harmful is that it hurts people's feelings. I'm just not willing to do that. In the comic book business, there are some hangers-on, there are some people who are lazy, there are some people who don't care—there are people like that in any field—but I think most of the people try very hard. That's my chief criticism of critics. I think that most critics don't understand how a comic book is put together. You know that, putting a magazine together, how hard it is, and how many x-factors there are.

Here's a wonderful case in point (*laughs*). I won't mention the artist, because I think he's a good artist and I think he tried—he *failed* miserably in this instance—but I think he did try. I wrote one story—I *knew* it was a mistake the minute I did it, but I wrote one story for a particular artist that was not in strict comic book form, but in short story form. It was one of the best stories I wrote, one of my favorites—it just flowed. It was all happening so well, that I didn't want to say, "Page three, panel two, dialogue, caption" the way you break down a script. It made a delightful little short story. I knew the artist, and I even discussed it with him on the phone, told him that I was going to give him this story. I said at the outset, "Now, I'll break it down for you in comic book style if you're not comfortable with it, but I'd like you to look at it this way because I think this flows pretty well." He said, "Fine, great, let's go with it that way." A major editorial mistake. Because the fan letters came out like this: "What brilliant artwork, but what a needlessly wordy, overdialogued story." What we ended up having to do was print the story verbatim. The artist did a wonderful job of drawing pictures—his pictures, isolated, in and of themselves, were wonderful. God, you could have hung them on the wall, blown them up and put them above your fireplace. But the storytelling was *miserable*. And the end effect was that the *writing* was bad. It looked like the writing got in the way of all those lovely pictures, whereas in fact what had happened was that the artist had miserably misinterpreted the story. He had drawn all the wrong pictures. Had he drawn the *right* pictures, it wouldn't have worked out that way. The end result was that it wrecked the story. A very bad experience.

But that's part of these x-factors I'm talking about. People write in and say, "How could you make such a big mistake here," and what they don't realize is that the Xerox machine broke that day, or, God knows, some stupid thing that makes it difficult. That's not a very good example, but most of the time it's simply the artist not having any idea—either having not any idea of what you're talking about or, more precisely, not caring. And I was constantly getting this with *Twisted Tales*, I would suggest the most tastefully polite bedroom scene or nude scene and *invariably* I would get stuff back that was unprintable! Because we were essentially R-rated comics, these artists would vent their spleens and I would get gigantic bazooms and penetration shots, stuff you wouldn't *believe*. In as many cases as I could I would send that stuff back, and say, "My God, give me a break, how in the world can we publish this stuff, you must be joking, we're not Last Gasp Comics, here. We have a certain ethic to maintain." I would get that stuff redrawn, but invariably the artists who would do that to me would be the wildest, the most spaced-out, and the latest.

I used to live in constant fear of that because we had no backlog; none. We were going from moment to moment, from minute to minute. Anything that was late was a disaster. Again, I won't name the artist, but I went through the worst time in my life . . . I was getting ulcers over a story, that eventually now will be printed in Eclipse Comics. It was a situation where the guy just would *not* turn the thing in and I would keep having to bump it and at the last minute find something to replace it; as a consequence the reason the last two or three issues of both *Alien Worlds* and *Twisted Tales* are not in my opinion up to snuff, is because I kept bumping what I knew was going to be a gorgeous job. I mean, he's a great artist—he's a terrific penciller, he's not too good an inker but he does marvelous pencils—but he just would not turn the thing in. We also went round and round about who he wanted to ink the job, from Frazetta on down, people who were just impossible to get. He was a nightmare. He was a prime example of an artist who's off in a corner and has no conception of what publishing is like.

In fact, another reason that Pacific went under was that Pacific couldn't afford to miss a single issue. The comics-buying public—and, in fact, even people working for the bigger companies—don't realize and can't imagine that the smaller independent companies must not miss an issue. I mean, they can occasionally be late, they occasionally do it, but they can never do it without being hurt very badly. I'm sure that that's even true to some degree with Fantagraphics. It was extremely true of Pacific. We just couldn't afford to be late and toward the end we were always late. Had we not been late toward the end—and when I say "we" collectively I'm being generous because I'd like to think it was not my fault; I was scrupulous about getting my issues in on time because I knew where my bread and butter was coming from.

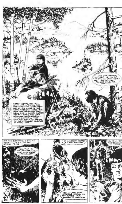
It was mostly the fault of the artists, several key artists who are friends of mine and so I don't want to talk about them. But had we not been late with those issues Pacific unquestionably would have gone on longer than they went and might indeed have survived. They simply ran into a cash flow problem that became so compounded they eventually went under. That is really sad. I know the same thing would be happening to Eclipse today, if Eclipse weren't in a situation where their overhead is so unbelievably low; that wasn't true of Pacific. You have to remember that Pacific was a distribution company first and a publishing company second, so when they began to plow some of their distribution money into their publishing, the publishing company had at all times to remain solvent, and there, towards the end, it just didn't. The only way it could remain solvent was if it produced its issues on time. That's abso-lute-ly imperative for a small house. You *have* to get the issues out and they have to sell a certain amount. They almost always will sell enough, but only if they get out there and get out there with regularity; that's the key to running a small company. That was one of the main factors that killed Pacific Comics.

And it was unfortunate. It was largely due to the artists, and that's why I think the artists in the '50s were a little more responsible. I think people during that age were a little more responsible.

AH: *They grew up during the war.*

JONES: Yeah, they grew up during the Depression, they knew what a buck meant. People my age who grew up in the '50s grew up during prosperity and never worried about where their next buck was coming from, where their next meal was coming from, and tended to be a little more slovenly and I think tend to have less respect for the other guy. I think that's unfortunate. It's a terrible thing to grow up during a depression. I wouldn't wish that on anybody, but I think there were some good lessons to be learned from that,

"I would suggest the most tastefully polite bedroom scene and *invariably* I would get stuff back that was unprintable!"



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and I think that responsibility is sadly lacking in the artistic community in comics today, and not just in comics, probably in all fields of endeavor. But we suffered for it because the artists would always say, "I'll get the god damned thing in on time" but what they were really saying was, "I'll get it in when I feel like it." In some cases, the job was better looking because it was late. But it doesn't really matter because the end result is, the job is late, the book is late, the money doesn't come, and when the money doesn't come and you're a small company, you go under (*claps hands*).

I guess what I'm trying to say is that it's so easy to just sit back in front of the tube or sit back in your theatre seat or sit back in your bedroom with a comic book and criticize. And criticism has a point and goddamn it, we *should* be good, there's no question about that. I'm not making excuses. Artists and editors, writers, actors, should do their best, give a hundred percent of themselves all the time. My point is that I think that they do. Mitigating factors are what most of the time screw things up. No one in Hollywood makes bad films on purpose. Marlon Brando once said that you can put the best director, the best actors, the best choreographers, the best editors, the best *everybody* together—and it's been done time and time again—and it's roll of the dice. You simply never know. Now granted, if you work with the best people over the long run, you're generally speaking going to get a better product than if you work with people who aren't. But it's happened: the most miserable technicians and untalented people in the world, believe it or not, are capable of producing a very arresting motion picture. It happens. I could name the pictures, but I don't want to do that; I don't think it's necessary. You probably know who they are anyway. But it's just a very very difficult field and that's my chief beef with critics. They sit at their typewriters and they tend to look at one side of the industry, which is the magazine racks, or the finished product side in front of the television or in front of the motion picture screen, and they don't know the machinations and don't understand the work that goes into them.

Anyway, I think we all reserve the right to fail. I think it is through failure that we grow as artists, as technicians, whatever you want to call it, craftspeople, and any real artist gets to be good, and is good, because of his failures, not because of his successes. It sounds tried and true and trite, but you really don't learn that much from your success. You learn how to have a big ego, that's about all. But when you fail, even when they're small failures, if you're smart enough to catalogue those failures, you grow. And I think critics need to learn that we need failure.

Besides, the things that always interested me most in comic books were things that didn't quite work right. One of the things that always bothered me about Marvel—and I don't mean to be picking on Marvel, Marvel is obviously a big success that doesn't need Bruce Jones, so there's no point picking on them—but it became so slick so fast. Marvel is such a well-oiled machine it doesn't foul up very often.

That's why I have a great affinity for a lot of the underground comics. The stuff was uneven. It's like a woman. The most beautiful women to me were the ones who were always off-center. Meryl Streep is in some ways much more beautiful to me than someone like Raquel Welch, and yet Raquel Welch is obviously a raving beauty. Sometimes amateur work that you see at comics conventions is a lot more arresting than the most finished—I won't name a name, but whoever that's a top draw now. Top draws tend to get a sameness to their work. Unfortunately, that's what the comic book and movie industry want. They want a sameness because sameness means a certain amount of cash flow, until a certain point. Then the audience gets sick of it and it stops, and then they look for something new. They're always looking for a new bandwagon to get on. That never interested me. The exciting things to me are the things that fail a little bit, because when something fails a little bit it usually succeeds a little bit, and that's what makes it exciting. That's what makes art exciting, that's what makes Picasso exciting, and John Updike exciting, and any of the people that I think stand the test of time. It's the little imperfections.

AH: *They say the flavor of water comes from its impurities.*

JONES: Yeah. It's true. This is one of the only reasons I reluctantly decided to go ahead with these four books that Eclipse is publishing. It's unequivocally true that most of the work isn't very good. But good by whose standards? Much of it has a kind of crude vigor that I simply can't do any more. I don't know how to think that way, because I'm not 23 any more and I don't think like a young man, I don't have a young man's sensibilities and his view of women and of life, and of comics, and of movies, and anything else; I may be a better artist now, my stuff may be easier to sell, but it's lost something. I was more excited about the industry in those days, I was trying to be a world-beater. I hadn't found my voice yet, and while it's grand to find your voice, and to have a voice, you come back to that same old adage, every time you gain something, you lose something. You're only going to be 16 once, you're only going to be 23 once. I think it's unfortunate some of these wonderful 23-year-old or 16-year-old kids that come to these conventions trying to peddle their work to DC or Marvel or Pacific or whoever aren't able to see that stuff published, because, sure, it isn't as polished as it could be, it isn't as professional as it could be, but I must tell you, Kim, I've seen some wonderful stuff. I looked at those kids when I was editing at Pacific and there was much of that work that I wanted to buy, I really did. I wanted to see color put on that work and I wanted to see it printed. But I knew the flak I would get: the overweening view of the average reader would be, "This isn't professional." Well, of course it isn't and that's the point, but look at it, it has its own attitude. You get into the industry and like any other industry, to succeed, you begin to emulate your peers. And while it makes you slick and makes you saleable it also creates a kind of sameness. And the hardest thing for most artists in later life to do is to try to go back and regain that freshness. It's so hard to do once it's lost. Sometimes it's virtually impossible. I'm not sure that maybe some of the Ernest Hemingways in the world found it so hard that they elected another way out. I'm not saying that's the primary reason Ernest Hemingway killed himself, I know he was in a severe depression and it may have been physiological. But you tend to forgive a not very well drawn line for the feeling that went behind the line, it was the reason you were drawing that line that makes it exciting, not the way it looks. After all, you can only get so good. ●

Robin Elizabeth Jones was born on February 8, 1986, shortly after this interview was conducted. Our heartfelt congratulations to Bruce and April on this occasion. —*EDS.*

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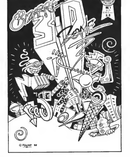
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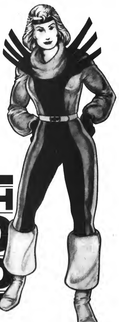


Illustration by DALE CRAIN

A TOUGH OLD BIRD

By Bill Kropfhauser

A HERO HISTORY OF THE BLACK CANARY

Tenacity in the face of overwhelming odds. That phrase is a very good description of both The Black Canary and her publishing history.

The blonde dynamo in the blue bolero jacket, strapless tank suit, fishnet stockings, and buccaneer boots was born at a time when most of her kind, the costumed hero, were beginning to die off. She appeared in the Johnny Thunder strip in *Flash Comics* #86 (Aug., 1947) and wasn't orignally intended to be Johnny's replacement.

In the late 40s, a recurrent theme in the strips authored or co-authored by robert Kanigher was the femme fatale. She was either completely evil or operating with questionable tactics. Green Lantern had The Harlequin. Wildcat had The Huntress, The Flash had both Star Sapphire and The Thorn—all were Kanigher creations. So naturally Johnny Thunder bumped into The Black Canary, who quickly conned him into burglarizing a second story room for a domino mask—the special invitation to a party being thrown by crime kingpin "Socks" Slade.

By using the mask to crash the party, Black Canary intended to burglarize Slade and steal the valuable gem Slade had stolen. Black Canary, though, planned to return it to its rightful owner.

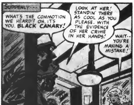
Slade caught Black Canary rifling his safe and was about to kill her when Johnny came to her rescue with some timely, if somewhat slapstick, assistance. The Canary disarmed Slade and slipped away with the gem, leaving Johnny lovestruck and his thunderbolt suspicious.

This early Black Canary was a crook, true, but one who stole only from other crooks. Since she didn't appear in the next issue, she was probably intended to be, like The Harlequin, a recurring character that bedeviled the hero with her good looks and ambiguous moral nature. But there was something in the character that must have struck Editor Sheldon Mayer or Story Editor Julius Schwartz, because after a similar pairing in issue #88, Black Canary was sharing Johnny Thunder's strip in Flash #90.

Additionally, the characterization of the Canary was altered slightly. She was still a mysterious figure, popping into Johnny's life from out of nowhere, but there was no longer a trace of wrongdoing on her part. Black Canary worked within the law, though the police were quite slow to catch on to that particular fact. The story usually would have Johnny stumble onto Black Canary's investigation or prevention of a crime, they'd both be captured and placed in a death trap where either Black Canary's quick wits or Johnny's thunderbolt would save them.

By now, Black Canary's character traits were taking root. She was a woman with tremendous courage and a tenacious spirit that refused to be defeated no matter what situation she was in. She possessed a knowledge of judo, a very logical mind and was extremely calm and creative in pressure situations, but what brought her to victory most was that unswaying refusal to give up. Black Canary possessed a singlemindedness and determination that rivaled DC's resident willful heroes, Batman and Green Lantern.

In fact, next to her Johnny Thunder looked even more ridiculous than before. Johnny became little more than comic relief in what had been for seven years his own strip.


SUDDENLY---
WHAT'S THE COMMOTION WE HEARD? OH, IT'S YOU, BLACK CANARY!
LOOK AT HER! STANDIN' THERE AS COOL AS YOU PLEASE, WITH THE EVIDENCE OF HER CRIME IN HER HANDS!
WAIT-- YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE!

All illustrations accompanying this article © 1986 DC Comics Inc.

Exit Thunder, Enter Lance

Suddenly, in Flash #92, almost everything changed. Black Canary was still there and was still the same person, however everything around her was different. Johnny Thunder made his farewell appearances concurrently in *Flash* #91 and *All Star* #38: the strip was now Black Canary's alone. Suddenly the woman of mystery had a secret identity, Dinah Drake: a civilian life running a florist shop: and a new steady guy, private detective Larry Lance. Her first story, "Huntress of the Highway," appeared without prior warning and from a notation on the art was originally intended to appear a few month later. If a transition story was ever intended to be produced, it was never printed.

Larry was a change from Johnny Thunder. True, Larry Lance was quite eccentric in his own way. He was ambitionless and a braggart, a detective who refused to take cases unless they appealed to his curiosity or his sense of justice, which frequently put him in severe financial trouble and out on the street. Larry also frequently took advantage of Dinah Drake's kindness, using her shop for a stopgap office and later an apartment. Dinah could have objected—she could have tossed him through the window if she wanted—but didn't because she was hopelessly in love with the guy, though she was careful to dole out her affection in thimblefuls, lest she give Larry even more reason to take advantage.

Not that Larry was totally unlikeable; he was totally honest and as brave as Black Canary was. He gave a good account of himself in a fight and occasionally had an inspiration, though Black Canary usually did most of his detective work for him. They made a more efficient team than her and Johnny Thunder because Larry wasn't nearly as daffy as old JT was and he got underfoot less.

Another problem Black Canary had to face was one most back-up features at DC had. Back-ups had only six to eight pages to tell a story in, usually six. That didn't allow for very much creativity, and back-ups usually became formularized.

Black Canary's formula generally went like this: She and Larry would encounter a crime, either through bad luck or Larry's investigations, and be implicated in it. In order to clear him, her, or their name(s), they investigated further and encountered the real villain, who would capture them and leave them in a death trap. When everything looked hopeless and Larry had given up, Black Canary would use her quick wits and unrelenting spirit to find a way out. They they would wrap up the case.

It wasn't always as boring as it sounds—in fact some tales were quite interesting little adventures. It really depended on how contrived circumstances were and how outlandish the death trap was.

Scripts were usually by Robert Kanigher and art was usually by Carmine Infantino, with either Bernard Sachs or Frank Giacoia inking. Kanigher generally performed well on the series as, one, she was his character and, two, he only had six pages and couldn't repeat a story element incessently, as he had a tendency to do in longer stories.

Infantino's art was workmanlike, in Sheldon Mayer's quasi-Caniff house style. Larry Lance was tall and wiry, with dark hair and a roguish grin. Black Canary was slim and petite, but determined and a surprising powerhouse when unleashed. Infantino's angular layouts fit the action orientation of the strip and he gave it a dark, moody atmosphere that was very effective and distinguished it from the other *Flash* Comics features.

The Eternal Team Player

While Black Canary was soloing in *Flash*, she was filling Johnny Thunder's spot in The Justice Society in *All Star* Comics. Her first contact with the group was through Johnny. He asked her to tell his teammates of his death.

After she arrived at JSA headquarters, she and Wonder Woman discovered that the other five members were as dead as Johnny. What was even stranger was that they'd been killed by six long dead murderers from history.

Using the purple healing ray, Wonder woman restored the JSA to life and they immediately set out to nab the villains who had killed them, after a cursory "thank you" to Black Canary and Wonder Woman for saving them. The JSA couldn't make their own murders stick, but the sextet of killers had also murdered six Gotham City citizens before killing the heroes.

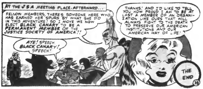
Each JSA member found the foe that had laid him low and laid the foe low, only to find that each killer was a robot covered in wax, sculpted to look human. Upon that discovery, each hero was captured again and left to die in a wax museum's wax vat.

Suddenly the Lucretia Borgia statue attacked the villain. In the struggle "Lucretia" was revealed to be Black Canary, who had been tailing Johnny, in disguise. The villain was accidentally hurled over the second floor balcony they were struggling on to his death. After that, Black Canary was invited to sit in on JSA meetings, though full membership was still six months away.

Black Canary subbed for an "ailing" Johnny Thunder in the next two issues, but didn't take the spotlight. *All-Star* #41, though, gave her the spotlight to share with The Harlequin. Ironically, the story, feturing two of Robert Kanigher's best '40s creations teaming up for the only time, was written by John Broome.

The Wizard's second assemblage of villains under the banner of the Injustice Society of the World featured himself, The Icicle, The Fiddler, The Huntress, The Sportsmaster, and The Harlequin. But The Harlequin only attended to learn their plans to steal America's most famous monuments, then left to tip off the JSA.

The Golden Age Black Canary accepts her membership into the Justice Society of America.


AT THE JSA MEETING PLACE, AFTERWARD...
FELLOW MEMBERS, THERE'S SOMEONE HERE WHO HAS EARNED HER SPURS BY WHAT SHE DID IN THIS ADVENTURE! SO I MOVE WE NOW ELECT BLACK CANARY TO BE A PERMANENT MEMBER OF THE JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA!!
AYE! SPEECH, BLACK CANARY! SPEECH!
THANKS! AND I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU HOW PROUD I AM TO BE AT LAST A MEMBER OF AN ORGANIZATION LIKE OURS THAT WILL ALWAYS FIGHT TO THE DEATH TO PRESERVE OUR AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS AND OUR AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE!
THE END
33

Unfortunately for her, The Sportsmaster followed her and captured the entire JSA single-handedly. Left behind Harlequin was found by Black Canary just in time to be captured by Icicle. When they got back to the Injustice Society's lair, they found the entire JSA brainwashed into servitude.

Left in the bottom of a mine shaft, Black Canary used Green Lantern's suggestable state to convince him he has the power to free them all. The entire group then made short work out of the Injustice Society. At the tale's end, Black Canary is awarded membership for saving them twice in six months.

After that, Black Canary became one of the team and was generally overshadowed by Green Lantern, Wonder Woman, or Flash, just as the other members of the team were. She did get the decisive action in *All-Star* #45, when she pretended to join Dr. Egri in order to sabatoge his plans to conquer the JSA with his cosmic power talismans.

All-Star Comics converted to westerns in March, 1951, and with its conversion, all of its co-stars figuratively died, with the exception of Wonder Woman. Black Canary's published career died with the rest, seemingly forever.

Return in Silver

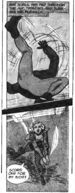
In *Flash* #137 (June, 1963), the Justice society was brough out of retirement by Gardner Fox, who had rescued the first Flash from oblivion the previous year. Fox obviously went for the last line-up anyone had seen, but Johnny Thunder replaced Black Canary, one of the few times he managed that trick. The book was successful, but their return was already in the works anyway for the August issue of *Justice League of America*, this time with Dr. Fate replacing Johnny, Hourman subbing for Dr. Midnite, and Black Canary taking over for Wonder Woman, to prevent confusion with the JLA's Wonder Woman.

Black Canary more than held her own as she was teamed with Hawkman against The Wizard, but the team structure didn't allow her the spotlight. The success of the book did allow Fox and Editor Julius Schwartz to make the reunion a yearly event. Though usually overshadowed by two legions of more powerful, more prestigeous heroes, Black Canary holds the distinction of being the only member of the JSA to appear in every one of the anniversary team-ups with the JLA, (while a member of the Justice Society, that is). Of course, one could say that Fox just used her to give the JSA some female representation, since Wonder Woman was being shied away from. I tend to think Fox and/or Schwartz liked the lady in the blue fishnets.

To lend that statement some credence, in 1965 Schwartz decided to give the JSA members a try-out on their own, so he selected four heroes to be teamed two each in *Showcase* and *The Brave & The Bold*, each running relatively concurrent to each other. Three of the four he picked had generated the most comment in their JLA appearances without being dopplegangers of a then-current DC star; they were Dr. Fate, Starman, and Hourman. The fourth was Black Canary.

In the first of two issues, Black Canary and Larry Lance (her husband now) teamed up to aid of Starman against one of his old enemies, The Mist, in *The Brave & The Bold* #61 (Jul.-Aug., 1965). Next issue, Starman and Black Canary came to the rescue of Wildcat against his old foe, The Huntress, with her husband, The Sportsmaster (the '50s were a real romantic time on Earth-2).

She gave a good accounting of herself again, but this wasn't quite the same woman. She still was unswervingly brave and adept at defending herself, but the years were catching up with her. She was still the youngest member of the JSA, until Robin's admission, but by then she was well into her 40s and some of the tenacity of her youth was on the wane. As drawn by Murphy Anderson, she had filled out the once slim figure and there was the barest hint


SHE HURLS HIM FAR THROUGH THE AIR, TWISTING AND TURNING HELPLESSLY...
SCORE ONE FOR MY SIDE!

of lines around her eyes and mouth.

The tryout wasn't successful enough to warrant a series of her own, even paired with Starman. Dr Fate and Hourman didn't do much better. Only a later tryout given to The Spectre proved successful. As it was, Black Canary and Dr. Fate had to live with yearly roles in the JLA-JSA team-up, with their co-stars appearing even less frequently.

A Chapter Closes; Another Opens

Justice League #73 began innocently enough. Ted Knight was stargazing, when he spotted a peculiar body moving in the heavens. he investigated as Starman and encountered the exiled star entity, Aquarius. The entity found that Starman's rod would replenish and refocus its wounded energies and took the rod, sending Starman plummeting to the ground—directly at the feet of a visiting Larry and Dinah Lance.

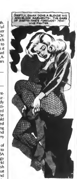
Realizing they were both out of their league, Dinah switched to Black Canary and called in the JSA to do battle with the god-like energy being out to destroy the world because it suited his mad, childish whim. Soon Dr. Fate realized that they were all out of their league and dispatched The Red Tornado to Earth-1 for reinforcements. That done, Fate shielded himself and his teammates from the being's assault for two weeks until help could arrive, shile Earth-2 was hurled into limbo.

Aquarius fled upon the Justice League's arrival in *JLA #74*, but not before leaving a command to fight and kill the JLA—a command that possessed the Justice Society the second Dr. Fate dropped his shield. Weak and demoralized, the JSA were easy prey—even obstinants like Green Lantern and Black Canary. Then tragedy struck.

Earth-1's Green Lantern sent out a beam to find Aquarius. When it sensed the beam, Aquarius hurled it back at its owner, the beam now metamorphosized into a deadly force. However, Aquarius's aim was of and the force, now in theform of a giant eldritch boulder, careened toward Black Canary, stuck helplessly to the ground by an adhesive from Green Arrow's "stick'em shaft."

Larry Lance struck Green Arrow from behind and was about to murder him when the boulder came into view. Larry's love for Dinah, which had been doubtful since his first appearance in 1948, triumphed over the spell of Aquarius: he saved his wife by diving in front of the boulder, sacrificing himself for the woman who had saved him countless times in the '40s.

Overcome by a tragedy for the first time in her recorded history, Black Canary abandoned her home, friends, and any family she might have had on Earth-s and went with the Justice League to Earth-1 to start over.


SWIFTLY, DINAH DONS A BLONDE WIG AND BLACK GARMENTS— THE GARB OF EARTH-TWO'S FOREMOST FEMININE FIGHTER...

Why? The psychological reasons are her own and writer Denny O'Neil's, but the nuts and bolts reasons were probably as follows: Wonder Woman had recently departed the JLA for reasons of her own and the ranks were under-populated. O'Neil preferred the vacancy be filled with a woman, as the current roster was exclusively male. In a conference with Julius Schwartz and whomever else needed to be there, Black Canary's name obviously came up and was mutually acceptable.

Her first issue with the Justice League found the normally logical, collected Black Canary in an emotional vacuum, confused by recent events and the strange new world she was living on, as well as for other reasons which would be revealed much later. She leaned on the members of the Justice League for stability and security, one member in particular: The Batman.

After several cases with the Justice League in which her romantic side and her tenacious side remained dormant, she was left alone in the JLA satellite for a time with Batman, and her emotions once again uncharacteristically spilled forth (in a story written by her creator, yet). The Batman moved to console her, and Black Canary reached out for him. That in itself was surprising, that she would reach out to as aloof and repellent a person as Batman—though not ludicrous in her state of mind. What was even more surprising was Batman responding, showing unguessed feelings for the Canary.

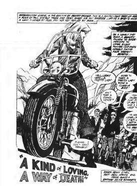
After a tender embrace though, Batman tore himself away, saying he loved an enigmatic "someone." Kanigher was purposefully vague on this point, allowing the reader to fill in the blank with whichever of Batman's current or former flames they felt was appropriate (I favor The Catwoman personally). Whomever he meant, he unintentionally shredded Dinah Drake's heart more.

Batman was given a chance to make amends (or make things worse) a few months later over in Murray Boltinoff's *Brave & The Bold*. Batman was working with Earth-1's Larry Lance to nab the underworld hit man known as The Collector, when he discovered that Larry was seeing a beautiful black haired woman who turned out to be Dinah Drake (looking all of 20 years old; more on that later, too).

Her heart shattered by her Larry's death and Batman's fumble, Dinah sought out that world's Larry to see if she could recapture the past. This Larry, though he smiled and joked like his counterpart, lacked two things Dinah's Larry had: honesty and a disregard for money. Those differences led this Larry down a path the other Larry may have encountered and turned away from. And at the end of that path was Larry's corrupt other self: The Collector.

The story showed off Bob Haney's talent for shrewdly accurate portrayals of human behavior, both good and bad, and was memorable because Haney carried his beginning story premise to the end, rather than fudging at the last moment as he often did. Larry died a violent death of his own making and Black Canary was left shattered again. With that, she turned to the one person who had helped her most during her efforts to acclimate herself to Earth-1: Green Arrow.

In a lot of ways, Green Arrow was like her ex-husband: He was admirably brave, scrupulously honest and had a Quixotic sense of justice, especially for the little guy. He also was loud and brash and, since losing his fortune through embezzlement, an insufferable braggart. Before his loss, Green Arrow was a colorless, hopelessly boring (excuse the pun) straight arrow. Green Arrow, as written by Denny O'Neil, was so much like her Larry Lance that it was only natural that Black Canary would fall for him.


WASHINGTON STATE, IN THE SHADOW OF MOUNT RAINIER. THIS IS A MAGNIFICENT PART OF AMERICA, A PLACE OF TALL, STATELY TREES AND CRISP, SWEET AIR AND BREEZES SOFT AS A BABY'S WHISPER... A LAND TOUCHED BY GOD, AND NOT YET DEFILED BY MAN...
ON A LONELY DIRT ROAD, A BEAUTY PAUSES TO GAZE—PERHAPS TO OFFER SILENT PRAYER—AND FINDS HERSELF FACING FOUR GREASY BEASTS...
HELL... LOOKY HERE... A PRETTY LADY!
MORE 'N THAT, A PRETTY LADY RIDIN' A CLASS-A BIKE!
AIN'T THAT A COINCIDENCE?
YEAH, CAUSE I JUST PILED UP MY BIKE AND I SURE NEED 'NOTHER!
YA WANNA LEND... YOURS, CUTIE—OR DO I GOTTA BORROW IT THE HARD WAY!?
PLEASE... I DON'T WANT TROUBLE!
"A KIND of LOVING, A WAY of DEATH!"
STORY: DENNY O'NEIL
ART: NEAL ADAMS AND FRANK GIACOIA
EDITING: JULIE SCHWARTZ

The only trouble was that Green Arrow was gone, roaming the western United States with Green Lantern and a Guardian of The Universe to find "the true spirit of America." America in the dawning seventies was searching its collective soul and the Dynamic Green Duo was scampering to join the parade. The result for the reader was a classic series of stories, but for Dinah Drake it meant being run down by a motorcycle gang in Wahington state.

In *Green Lantern/Green Arrow #78* Green Arrow stumbled across one of the thugs riding on Dinah's motorcycle (her prowess with cycles having been grafted onto her by O'Neil). O'Neil used that as a jumping off point and Green Arrow and his buddy traced their way back to where Black Canary had been left.

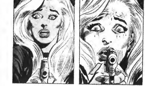
What they found was a woman with a healing body and a wounded mind. Black Canary had been taken in by the white supremacist cult, Joshua's Family, and in her weakened condition been brainwashed into staying and participating in preparations for the slaughter of a nearby Indian reservation.

Naturally Black Canary's good nature won out over Joshua's preachings, with a little help from her feelings for Green Arrow. The fact of the matter was that the Black Canary of the '40s would never have allowed it to happen in the first place. She was too strong to succumb to Joshua's twisted words, even with the emotional turmoil she'd experienced in the preceding eight months. Julius Schwartz judiciously ended such stories with that issue.

Amid all of that emotional turmoil was one more little element O'Neil added to the mix to keep Black Canary and her Justice League teammates off balance. When she crossed the barrier from Earth-2 to Earth-1, she acquired her very own super power: The ability to project sonic force waves.

They first manifested themselves in *Justice League* #75 while Black Canary watched Hawkman wonder aloud to some of the other members if she could play in their league. She'd been a costumed hero for 22 years, she'd faced dozens of superpowered menaces with the Justice Society and *he* wondered if she could hack it. Black Canary stewed until she boiled over, screamed for them all to stop—and bowled everyone in the room over, including Superman.

Whether Schwartz and O'Neil gave her that power to distinguish her from Batman or because they, like Hawkman, didn't think she could cut it, the power quickly became a millstone around her neck. Though she used it to give the JLA a victory in #77, Dinah was unable to control the



power for months and it went against the "courageous and determined woman" roots of the character. Her sonic power was used less and less frequently as time progressed and Black Canary soon reverted to what she knew: Judo, quick wits, and guts.

My Favorite Co-Star

After some counseling from the Guardian and some social work among the Indian reservtion to renew her sense of purpose, Black Canary joined Green Lantern and Green Arrow on tour. Their first stop, though, wasn't in the continental United States.

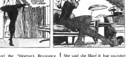
She testified on behalf of the Guardian, who was on trial for putting the life of Green Lantern over that of billions. After Oa, she travelled with the others to the planet of the Guardian's exile, Maltus, a planet where, due to the intervention of Mother Juna, the population numbers were running rampant and no outsider, especially a woman of child-bearing years, was particularly welcome.

In helping to overcome Mother Juna, Black Canary proved her worth by defeating a ten foot monster that had beaten the men, and in the next story, when she saved Green Lantern from a trap built by his old enemy, Sinestro, the implacable over-achiever was back.

But that made her relationship with Green Arrow, played out in countless co-starring roles with him in *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*, in *Justice League*, and in each of their regular spots in *World's Finest*, quite stormy. Sometimes Black Canary would defer and listen to Green Arrow's unnecessary over-protectiveness or patronizing lectures on "how to be a super-hero" (ridiculous when you consider under the Earth-1/Earth-2 rules, she'd been at the game longer than he had, a fact Green Arrow practically admitted to himself in *Justice League* #74). Sometimes, though, she would rebel, [illegible] with Green Arrow or worse. [illegible], Lance tended to be protective, too, but he knew when to back off and let the better fighter take charge.

For a while, a running plotline had Black Canary looking for a job, both as Black Canary and as Dinah Drake, so she wouldn't have to sponge off of Green Lantern (or listen to Green Arrow's lectures). Her first position was a gym instructor at a private school for children run by a power mad crook and a little telekenetic girl he used to enforce his wishes; that in *Green Lantern/Arrow* #83.

It probably didn't help her case when Green Arrow helped extricate her from that, so she went off on her own again and took a job as Black Canary, teaching self-defense to a supposed rape prevention center


THE FEELING OF FOREBODING I EXPERIENCED JUST PRIOR TO THE ATTACK OF THE BIRDS IS STRONGER THAN EVER-
—AND I'LL FEEL BETTER ABLE TO DEAL WITH IT AS BLACK CANARY!!

called the "Woman's Resistance League." That, however, turned out to be a front for a groups of The Catwoman's gang members plotting to break her out of prison, in *Adventure* #418-419. One patronizing sidelight of the story was author O'Neil having Black Canary remember a Green Arrow lecture to motivate her escape, rather than 25 years of prior experience on her own.

Finally Dinah went back to what she knew and opened a florist shop in Star City, Green Arrow's home base. For the next ten years, Black Canary eked out a meager existence in DC comics, occasionally appearing solo and succeeding to the extent the whim and talent of her author allowed. Usually, though, she was a co-star or guest star in another character's magazine, usually with Green Lantern, Green Arrow or the Justice League, struggling to shine amidst more powerful allies and usually being defined as little more than Green Arrow's girl friend.

Along this trail, two important stories appeared that shed some light on this woman who, for close to 30 years, had never had her life prior to her whistling for Johnny Thunder in *Flash* #86 even hinted at.

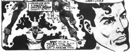
The first was her origin, printed in a special "Secret Origins" issue of *DC Special Series*. The story, by Gerry Conway, told us that the Drake family had been in law enforcement since the 1750s and since there was no boy in the family, Richard Drake was going to turn his little girl into a cop, whether Dinah liked it or not. She said she liked it, but sounded like she was pleasing him more.

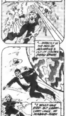
It also introduced Richard's partner, a more serious and sedate Larry Lance. But when Dinah's application to the police force was rejected, Richard suffered a heart attack and died, so Dinah decided to follow her dead mother and become a florist. However, the examples of Batman and others motivated her to crime-busting background and she became a costumed hero.

The problems I have with the story revolve around two points, one minor and one major. First, I find it highly improbable that the ambitionless and anti-authoritarian Larry Lance would be a cop or last long enough on the force to be promoted to plainclothes work. Conway conveniently forgot Larry's rogueish personality in characterizing him for this story, just as he forgot that Dinah always kept this rogue at arm's length where she could keep an eye on him.

The major point is with Dinah herself. I've always found Dinah to be a willful, self-determining woman, and that woman couldn't emerge from a girl who was verbally bullied by her father and was neurotic about pleasing him. Conway tried precisely that and failed. Dinah the adult was right in the story but Dinah the child rang false.

In this scene from JUSTICE LEAGUE #220, many of the mysteries of the Canary's past are revealed.


--COMPLETE WITH A MAGICALLY-CREATED SECOND CANARY CRY--
GRIEF CAN BE A TERRIBLE THING, BUT IT IS ALSO, IN A STRANGE WAY, A HEALING THING.


HIS STICKUM-SHAFT ARROW CAUGHT ME IN STRANDS OF SPECIALLY-TREATED PLASTIC--I WAS TRAPPED UNABLE TO MOVE--
--DIRECTLY IN THE PATH OF AQUARIUS'S OUT-OF-CONTROL ENERGY SPHERE.
I WOULD HAVE DIED--BUT LARRY--LARRY LANCE, MY HUSBAND--FLUNG HIMSELF IN AQUARIUS'S PATH, TO PROTECT ME--!

Another scene from Roy Thomas's ingenious explanation of the Canary's career.

The second story, in *Justice League* #219-220, gave the readers an explanation for the various inconsistencies that had popped up over the years, such as why Black Canary took to Green Arrow and so quickly after the death of Larry Lance, how she gained sonic powers, why she was so confused and tentative after coming to Earth-1, and, more importantly, why a woman nearing 50 looked like she was in her 20s.

She found out the answers to these questions, along with the readers, when she and old pal Starman visited the magican "thunderbolt dimension," the region Johnny Thunder's thunderbolt was summoned from. They were trying to find out why the thunderbolt has appeared on Earth-1 and struck down the JLA, leaving them comatose. They found the reason to be Earth-1's evil Johnny Thunder, who has assumed control of the thunderbolt dimension—but that wasn't all they found.

The pair also found the dead bodies of Larry Lance and the first Black Canary, which had been lying in state for almost 15 years, and in issue #220 the full story was revealed. The Black Canary that had been running around on Earth-1 was the child of Larry and Dinah Lance.

Roy Thomas's story told of a baby girl born to a former costumed hero and her detective husband, and of a visit by the Wizard, seeking vengeance for *All-Star* #41. He placed a curse on the baby so that her voice would amplify into sonic force waves of potentially destructive power.

Dinah went to her friend Johnny Thunder, estranged from her since her marriage to Lance, and he summoned the thunderbolt. However, the thunderbolt could only offer to place the child in a magic coma and exile her in the thunderbolt dimension, where her power would be harmless. Soberly, both parents agreed.

Years later, when Black Canary was making the jump with Superman from Earth-2 to Earth-1, she began to experience crippling pain. A quick examination by Superman revealed that she has been caught in fallout from the deadly boulder sent by Aquarius and was dying of the same enchantment that had killed Larry.

Before dying, she asked to see her baby girl again, now grown into the image of her at 20. Dinah asked if the girl could somehow take her place and with a hasty scheme entrusted by the thunderbolt and Superman, Dinah's memories were implanted into her daughter's blank mind. With an adult mind to control her sonic power, little Dinah could live again, even though she was living her mother's life.

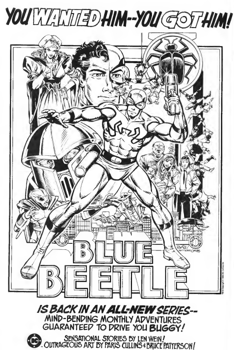
It was an ingenious tale, explaining all of the mistakes and mischaracterizations of Black Canary's second life in comics. It was entirely logical that this Black Canary raect as if she were a different person, with false memories and a traumatic childhood to affect her subconscious. It's easy to see how the times she fought Green Arrow were her mother speaking and the times she deferred were when her own personality kicking in.

I just wish the original didn't have to die. (I'm assuming she's dead—Roy Thomas is a cagey writer and only implied her death, leaving her option open for a revival of the original, possibly back on Earth-2. Her recent costume change in *Who's Who* is more evidence pointing to the possibility.) I've always liked Black Canary and thought she had the potential of a star, if only she had the proper creative team to make her potential flower.

In researching this article, I've felt a genuine respect for the character, joined with affection. Black Canary did more with less, and against steeper odds, than most characters published in the annals of comic books. She started with two strikes against her and survived by sheer grit and determination, and the spark of chemistry with the readership that refused to die in the face of economic or editorial hardships.

Green Arrow once said she was "a classy lady." That old boy knew just what he was talking about, too. ●

This is BILL KROPFHAUSER's first article for Amazing Heroes


YOU WANTED HIM--YOU GOT HIM!
BLUE BEETLE
IS BACK IN AN ALL-NEW SERIES--
MIND-BENDING MONTHLY ADVENTURES
GUARANTEED TO DRIVE YOU BUGGY!
SENSATIONAL STORIES BY LEN WEIN!
OUTRAGEOUS ART BY PARIS CULLINS & BRUCE PATTERSON!

BLACK CANARY CHECKLIST

STARRING ROLES

Adventure #418-419 (Apr-May, 1972)
Cover: Bob Oksner
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Alex Toth

Comic Cavalcade #25 (Dec-Jan, 1948)
Cover: Martin Naydel/Bob Oksner
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs

DC Special #3 (Spring, 1969)
Cover: Nick Cardy and Neal Adams
"Special Delivery Death"
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Lee Elias/Bernard Sachs

DC Special Series #10 (no month given, 1978)
Cover: Jose Garcia-Lopez
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Mike Vosburg/Terry Austin

Detective #464 (Oct, 1976)
Cover: Ernie Chan
"A Hot Time in Star City Tonight"
Story by Bob Rozakis; Art by Mike Grell/Terry Austin

Flash #92 (Feb, 1948)
Cover: Lee Elias
"Huntress Of The Highway"
Story by Bob Rozakis; Art by Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs
#93 (Mar, 1948)
Cover: Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs
"Mystery Of The Crimson Crystal"
Story by Lee Goldsmith?; Art by Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs
#94 (Apr, 1948)
Cover: Joe Kubert
"Corsage Of Death"
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs
#95 (May, 1948)
Cover: Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs
"An Orchid For The Deceased"
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs

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STARMAN
BLACK CANARY
THE SPORTSMASTER AND HUNTRESS
BIG SUPER HERO HUNT!

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA
CRISIS ON EARTH ONE

#96 (Jun, 1948)
Cover: Joe Kubert
"Riddle Of The Topaz Brooch"
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs
#97 (Jul, 1948)
Cover: Lee Elias/Moe Worthman
"Mystery Of The Stolen Cloth"
Story by Lee Goldsmith?; Art by Carmine Infantino/Frank Giacoia
#98 (Aug, 1948)
Cover: Joe Kubert
"The Byzantine Black"
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Lee Elias/Bernard Sachs
#99 (Sep, 1948)
Cover: Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs
"Time Runs Out"
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs
#100 (Oct, 1948)
Cover: Joe Kubert
"The Circle Of Terror"
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs
#101 (Nov, 1948)
Cover: Carmine Infantino/Frank Giacoia
"The Day That Wouldn't End"
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Carmine Infantino/Frank Giacoia
#102 (Dec, 1948)
Cover: Joe Kubert
"Riddle Of The Roses"
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs
#103 (Jan, 1949)
Cover: Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs
"Mystery On Ice"
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs
#104 (Feb, 1949)
Cover: Joe Kubert
"Crime On Her Hands"
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs

World's Finest #244 (May, 1977)
Cover: Neal Adams
"Rainbows Of Doom"
Story by Jack C. Harris; Art by Mike Nasser/Terry Austin
#245 (Jun-Jul, 1977)
Cover: Neal Adams
"Hospital Of Fear"
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Mike Nasser/Terry Austin
#246 (Aug-Sep, 1977)
Cover: Neal Adams
"Wolf Hunt"
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Terry Austin/Mike Nasser
#247 (Oct-Nov, 1977)
Cover: J. Garcia-Lopez/Dick Giordano
"Requiem Of Rage"
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Sal Amendola
#251 (Jun-Jul, 1978)
Cover: Jim Aparo
"The Vertigo Version"
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Trevor Von Eeden/Vince Colletta
#256 (Apr-May, 1979)
Cover: Ross Andru/Dick Giordano
"The Night The Cry Failed"
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Jose Delbo/Vince Colletta
#267 (Feb-Mar, 1981)
Cover: Rich Buckler/Dick Giordano
"With This Gun . . . I Thee Slay"
Story by Bob Haney; Art by Trevor Von Eeden/Vince Colletta

CO-STARRING ROLES

Action #428 (Oct, 1973)
Cover: Nick Cardy
"The Plot To Kill Black Canary"
co-starring Green *Arrow*
Story by Elliot Maggin; Art by Dick Giordano
#444 (Feb, 1975)
Cover: Nick Cardy
"The Black Canary Is Dead"
co-starring Green *Arrow*
Story by Elliot Maggin; Art by Mike Grell
#445 (Mar, 1975)
Cover: Nick Cardy
"Find Black Canary—Dead Or Alive"
co-starring Green *Arrow*
Story by Elliot Maggin; Art by Mike Grell
#446 (Apr, 1975)
Cover: Nick Cardy
"Billion Dollar Bust"
co-starring Green *Arrow*
Story by Elliot Maggin; Art by Mike Grell
#450 (Aug, 1975)
Cover: Dick Giordano
"The Gremlin In The Works"
co-starring Green *Arrow*
Story by Elliot Maggin; Art by Mike Grell
#451 (Sep, 1975)
Cover: Bob Oksner
"The Day The Dreaming Dies"
co-starring Green *Arrow*
Story by Elliot Maggin; Art by Mike Grell
#452 (Oct, 1975)
Cover: Mike Grell/Bob Oksner

GREEN LANTERN
GREEN ARROW
FAMILY
LET HIM GO YOU MANIACS
KILL YOU BOTH!

DC
20¢
BLACK CANARY
SAFE LANDING
The 3-MILLION DOLLAR SKY!

"When Madmen Rule The World"
co-starring Green Arrow
Story by Elliot Maggin; Art by Mike Grell
#456 (Feb. 1976)
Cover: Mike Grell
"Bail Out The Nutty Kid"
co-starring Green Arrow
Story by Elliot Maggin; Art by Mike Grell
#457 (Mar. 1976)
Cover: Bob Oksner
"Flight Of The Nutty Kid"
co-starring Green Arrow
Story by Elliot Maggin; Art by Mike Grell
#458 (Apr. 1976)
Cover: Bob Oksner
"Masquerade Of The Nutty Kid"
co-starring Green Arrow
Story by Elliot Maggin; Art by Mike Grell

The Brave & The Bold #61 (Jul-Aug. 1965)
Cover: Murphy Anderson
"The Big Super-Hero Hunt"
co-starring Starman
Story by Gardner Fox; Art by Murphy Anderson
#62 (Sep-Oct. 1965)
Cover: Murphy Anderson
"The Big Super-Hero Hunt"
co-starring Starman and Wildcat
Story by Gardner Fox; Art by Murphy Anderson
#91(Aug-Sept. 1970)
Cover: Nick Cardy
"A Cold Corpse For The Collector"
co-starring Batman
Story by Bob Haney; Art by Nick Cardy
#100 (Feb-Mar. 1972)
Cover: Nick Cardy
"Warrior In A Wheelchair"
co-starring Batman, Robin & Green Arrow
Story by Bob Haney; Art by Jim Aparo
#107 (May-Jun. 1973)
Cover: Jim Aparo
"The Three Million Dollar Sky"
co-starring Batman
Story by Bob Haney; Art by Jim Aparo
#141 (Mar-Apr. 1978)
Cover: Jim Aparo
Story by Bob Haney, Art by Jim Aparo
#166 (Sep. 1980)
Cover: Jim Aparo
"Requiem For Four Canaries"
co-starring Batman
Story by Michael Fleisher, Art by Dick Giordano/Terry Austin

DC Comics Presents #30 (Feb. 1981)
Cover: Rich Buckler/Steve Mitchell
"A Dream Of Demons"
co-starring Superman
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Curt Swan/Vince Colletta
#54 (Feb. 1983)
Cover: Don Newton/Dick Giordano
"The Price of Progress"
co-starring Superman, Jimmy Olsen and Green Arrow
Story by Paul Kupperberg; Art by Don Newton/Dan Adkins

DC Special Blue Ribbon Digest #23 (Jul. 1982)
Cover: Jim Aparo
Reprint framing pages: co-starring Green Arrow
Story by Mike W. Barr; Art by Dan Spiegle

Detective #468 (Mar-Apr. 1977)
Cover: Jim Aparo
"The Battle Of The Thinking Machine"
co-starring Batman, Atom, Hawkman, Elongated Man, and Green Arrow
Story by Bob Rozakis; Art by Marshall Rogers/Terry Austin
#549 (Apr. 1985)
Cover: Pat Broderick
"Night Olympics"
co-starring Green Arrow
Story by Alan Moore; Art by Klaus Janson
#550 (May. 1985)
Cover: Pat Broderick
"Night Olympics, Part Two"
co-starring Green Arrow
Story by Alan Moore, Art by Klaus Janson

Flash #86 (Aug. 1947)
Cover: Joe Kubert/Frank Giacoia?
"The Black Canary"
co-starring Johnny Thunder
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Carmine Infantino/Frank Giacoia
#88 (Oct. 1947)
Cover: Joe Kubert
"The Map That Wasn't There"
co-starring Johnny Thunder
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Carmine Infantino/Frank Giacoia
#90 (Dec. 1947)
Cover: Carmine Infantino/Bernard Sachs
"Triple Exposure"
co-starring Johnny Thunder
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Carmine Infantino/Frank Giacoia
#91 (Jan. 1948)
Cover: Joe Kubert
"The Tumbling Trees"
co-starring Johnny Thunder
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Carmine Infantino/Frank Giacoia
#218 Oct-Nov. 1972)
Cover: Nick Cardy
"Green Arrow Is Dead"
co-starring Green Lantern
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Neal Adams/Dick Giordano

Green Lantern/Green Arrow #78 (Jul. 1970)
Cover: Neal Adams
"A Kind Of Loving, A Way Of Death"
co-starring Green Lantern and Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Neal Adams/Dick Giordano
#81 (Dec-Jan. 1971)
Cover: Neal Adams
"Death Be My Destiny"
co-starring Green Lantern & Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Neal Adams/Dick Giordano
#82 (Feb-Mar. 1971)
Cover: Neal Adams
"How Can You Fight A Nightmare"
co-starring Green Lantern and Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Neal Adams/Dick Giordano-Berni Wrightson
#83 (Apr-May. 1971)
Cover: Neal Adams
"And A Child Shall Destroy Them"
co-starring Green Lantern & Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Neal Adams/Dick Giordano
#86 (Oct-Nov. 1972)
Cover: Neal Adams
"They Say It'll Kill Me, But They Don't Say When"
co-starring Green Lantern, Green Arrow & Speedy
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Neal Adams/Dick Giordano
#94 (Apr-May. 1977)
Cover: Mike Grell
"Lure For An Assassin"
co-starring Green Lantern & Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Mike Grell/Terry Austin
#95 (Jun-Jul. 1977)
Cover: Mike Grell
"Terminal For A Tragedy"
co-starring Green Lantern & Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Mike Grell/Vince Colletta
#96 (Aug-Sep. 1977)
Cover: Mike Grell
"How Can An Immortal Die"
co-starring Green Lantern & Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Mike Grell/Vince Colletta
#97 (Oct-Nov. 1977)
Cover: Mike Grell
"Mystery Of The Mocker"
co-starring Green Lantern & Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Mike Grell/Vince Colletta
#98 (Dec. 1977)
Cover: Mike Grell
"Thus We May Die—Laughing"
co-starring Green Lantern & Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Mike Grell/Vince Colletta

DC
THE AWARD-WINNING COMIC!
GREEN LANTERN
GREEN ARROW

#100 (Feb. 1978)
Cover: Mike Grell
"Beware The Blazing Inferno"
co-starring Green Arrow & Speedy
Story by Elliot Maggin; Art by Mike Grell/Vince Colletta
#103 (May. 1978)
Cover: Mike Grell
"Earth—Asylum For An Alien"
co-starring Green Lantern & Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Alex Saviuk/Vince Colletta
#104 (Jun. 1978)
Cover: Mike Grell
"Proof Of The Peril"
co-starring Green Lantern, Green Arrow & Airwave
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Alex Saviuk/Colletta
#105 (Jul. 1978)
Cover: Mike Grell
"Thunder Doom"
co-starring Green Lantern & Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Alex Saviuk/Vince Colletta
#106 (Aug. 1978)
Cover: Mike Grell
"Peril In High Places And Low"
co-starring Green Lantern & Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Mike Grell/Vince Colletta
#109 (Nov. 1978) Cover: Mike Grell
"Assault On Replikon"
co-starring Green Lantern & Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Mike Grell/Vince Colletta
#115 (May. 1979) Cover: Alex Saviuk/D. Giordano "Vengeance Of The Crumbler"
co-starring Green Lantern & Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Alex Saviuk/Dave Hunt
#118 (Aug. 1979) Cover: Alex Saviuk/D. Giordano "Hell Quest"
co-starring Green Lantern and Green Arrow
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Alex Saviuk/Dave Hunt

Justice League of America #75 (Nov. 1969) Cover: Murphy Anderson "In Each Man There Is a Demon"
co-starring The Justice League
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Dick Dillin/Joe Giella
#77 (Dec. 1969) Cover: Murphy Anderson "Snapper Carr, Super-Traitor"
co-starring the Justice League
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Dick Dillin/Joe Giella

Wonder Woman #216 (Feb-Mar. 1977)
Cover: Bob Oksner
"Paradise in Peril"
co-starring Wonder Woman
Story by Elliot S. Maggin; Art by John Rosenberger/Vince Colletta
#308 (Oct. 1983)
Cover: Russ Andru/Dick Giordano
"Heritage"
co-starring Wonder Woman & Elongated Man
Story by Dan Mishkin; Art by Don Heck
#309 (Nov. 1983)
Cover: Ross Andru/Dick Giordano "The Black Canary Is Dead"
co-starring Wonder Woman & Elongated Man
Story by Dan Mishkin, Art by Don Heck

DC
WONDER WOMAN

#310 (Dec. 1983)
Cover: Howard Bender/Dick Giordano
"All's Fair"
co-starring Wonder Woman
Story by Dan Mishkin; Art by Mark Beachum/Pablo Marcos

World's Finest #247 (Oct-Nov. 1977)
Cover: Jose Garcia-Lopez/D. Giordano
"Isle Of Hate—Isle Of Dread"
co-starring Green Arrow
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Sal Amendola
#248 (Dec-Jan. 1978)
Cover: Jose Garcia-Lopez/D. Giordano
"Rebirth Is His Name"
co-starring Green Arrow
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Trevor Von Eeden/Vince Colletta
#249 (Feb-Mar. 1978)
Cover: Jose Garcia-Lopez/D. Giordano
"Will The Costume Make The Hero?"
co-starring Green Arrow
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Trevor Von Eeden/Vince Colletta
#250 (Apr-May. 1978)
Cover: Jim Aparo
"The Reality War"
co-starring Superman, Batman, Green Arrow and Wonder Woman Of Earth-2
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by George Tuska/Vince Colletta
#252 (Sep-Oct. 1978)
Cover: Jim Aparo
"Blades And Illusion"
co-starring Green Arrow
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Trevor Von Eeden/Vince Colletta
#253 (Oct-Nov. 1978)
Cover: Jim Aparo
"I Die Screaming"
co-starring Green Arrow, Hawkman & Hawkgirl
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Trevor Von Eeden/Vince Colletta
#254 (Dec-Jan. 1979)
Cover: Jim Aparo "Primeval Screams"
co-starring Green Arrow
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Trevor Von Eeden/Vince Colletta
#261 (Feb-Mar. 1980)
Cover: Russ Andru/Dick Giordano
"The Relativity Of Auntie Gravity"
co-starring Green Arrow
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Alex Saviuk/Frank Chiaramonte
#262 (Apr-May. 1980)
Cover: Ross Andru/Dick Giordano
"Gravitational Boomerang"
co-starring Green Arrow
Story by Gerry Conway; Art by Romeo Tanghal

SUPER-GROUPS *(significant role)*

All-Star #38 (Dec-Jan. 1948)
Cover: Alex Toth
"History's Crime Wave"
co-starring the Justice Society
Story by Robert Kanigher; Art by Alex Toth/Carmine Infantino/Toth, Infantino and Bob Oksner
#41 (Jun-Jul. 1948)
Cover: Alex Toth
"Case Of The Patriotic Crimes"
(made a JSA member at story's end)
Story by John Broome; Art by Alex Toth/Carmine Infantino/Arthur Peddy & Irwin Hasen/Toth, Infantino/Bernard Sachs & Hasen
#45 (Feb-Mar. 1949)
Cover: Irwin Hasen/Bob Oksner
"The Case Of The Cosmic Criminals"
Story by John Broome; Art by Irwin Hasen/Arthur Peddy/Hasen/Bernard Sachs

Justice League of America #73 (Aug. 1969)
Cover: Joe Kubert
"Star Light, Star Bright—Death Star I See Tonight"
(as a JSA member)
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Dick Dillin/Sid Greene
#74 (Sep. 1969)
Cover: Neal Adams
"Where Death Fears To Tread"
(as a JSA member)
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Dick Dillin/Sid Greene
#78 (Jan. 1970)
Cover: Gil Kane
"The Coming Of The Doomsters"
(first case as a JLA member)
Story by Denny O'Neil; Art by Dick Dillin/Joe Giella
#89 (Jun. 1971)
Cover: Neal Adams/Dick Giordano
"The Most Dangerous Dreams Of All"
Story by Mike Friedrich; Art by Dick Dillin/Joe Giella
#219 (Oct. 1983)
Cover: George Perez
"Crisis In The Thunderbolt Dimension"
co-starring the JSA
Story by Roy Thomas & Gerry Conway; Art by Chuck Patton/Romeo Tanghal
#220 (Nov. 1983)
Cover: George Perez
"The Doppleganger Gambit"
co-starring The JSA
Story by Roy Thomas; Art by Chuck Patton/Romeo Tanghal/Pablo Marcos

TOTAL GROUP APPEARANCES

All-Star #38-41 (as a guest star) **#42-57** (as a JSA member)
Justice League #21, 22, 29, 30, 37, 38, 46, 47, 64, 65, 73, 74, (as a JSA member) **78-84, 88, 89, 95, 97-100, 102, 104, 105, 109, 110, 112, 114, 118-121, 123, 124, 127, 128, 130, 132, 139-141, 143, 145-151, 154-157, 161-170, 173, 174, 177, 178, 180-182, 186-189, 191, 194-197, 200, 201-220** (as a JLA member)

Plus various cameo appearances in *Flash* (Green Lantern/Green Arrow), *Green Lantern* (Green Arrow) and *World's Finest* (Green Arrow). Black Canary's listing in **Who's Who: The Definitive Directory of the DC Universe** appeared in the Apr. 1985 issue (#2), and was drawn by Terry Austin.

BAN and SUPERMAN

By Brian K. Busch

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

Superman symbol and TM 1986 DC Comics Inc

Faster than a *New York Times* editorial! More powerful than the First Lady of the United States! Able to leap book burnings at a single bound! It's the survival of the comic book. Today the comic book industry is stronger than ever, with no end in sight. However, during the '40s and the '50s, a controversy arose that threatened superhero and horror comics with a fate worse than cancellation; it was the fate of censorship.

The most familiar name associated with comic censorship is Dr. Fredric Wertham, whose book *Seduction of the Innocent* focused on the relationship between comic books and juvenile delinquency. Wertham's book was a major catalyst in the October 26, 1954 formation of the Comic Code Authority.

Before *Seduction of the Innocent,* the controversy was blown to superhuman proportions in newspapers and magazines. It just goes to show that even Superman wasn't invulnerable to scandal.

Five years after the Man of Steel flexed his first muscle, the comic book controversy reached the media. In a *New York Times* article dated July 11, 1943, the Children's Book Committee of Child Study Association revealed its findings after studying 100 comics. Their main objections to comic books were the "unreality or violence of subject matters, the crudity and cheapness of format, the strain of young eyes and the spoiling of taste for better reading."

The Committee concluded that "the remedy lies not in forbidding, but rather in broadening the child's real experience and providing him with activities and interests that will compete with comics for his time and attention." According to their study, the kids' choices of reading matter "might be wider if other books were as easy to come by for ten cents."

A week later, July 18, 1943, the *New York Times* printed a letter originally published in the July newsletter of Foster Parents Plan for War Children. Eric G. Muggride writes from England:

> *Tonight there was still another raid. . . We had to take all the children from bed and bring them to the shelter. . . I wonder if I have ever told you the important part the American funny books play during these nights when the children must remain awake. Very little paper is released for comic books in England now. . . I wonder if you feel it would be worth the trouble to send the children more of these.*

Meanwhile back in the States, comics are labeled a "waste of time" and are said to cause children to "escape from real duties" by concerned parents. Once again, the Children's Books Committee of Child Study Association leaps to the analytical rescue. The Committee notes, "it is true that children do use comics for escape . . . but so have they always used books, and in recent years radio listening. They are a waste of time only if we believe that children's hours must all be spent in ways which will be educationally and culturally profitable. The fact is that we do not always know what profit accrues to children from this 'wasted time.'"

Five months pass. The scene is the headquarters of Child Study Association of America. One hundred teachers, librarians, parents, and comic publishers are present. Dr. S. Harcourt Peppard, Assistant Director of the Bureau of Child Guidance of the Department of Education, speaks. "Please let your children read the comics," he tells them, "and please, sometime, read them yourselves."

Josette Frank, Child Study Association member, tells all that "the conflict arising between parents and kids over the subject might be far more harmful than the poorest comic book in itself would ever be."

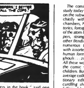
Peppard describes comics as "fulfilling a basic emotional need in children's lives for adventure and escape from relatives. Even adults daydream. Through comics, a child can satisfy his frustrations and expend his aggressiveness and hostility toward the world."

On the other side of the world on March 1944, a Tokyo broadcast reports the Japanese people are going to have "the propaganda and enlightenment power" of their comic strips "utilized in bolstering the fighting spirit." The Japanese Government will set up a "Greater East Asia Comic Strip Study Society" to start a "large drive to crush and bring the enemy, the United States and Britain, to their knees. . . ."

Not to be outdone by Japan on the negative aspects of comics, the White House makes the news on the subject. In 1944, the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt is asked about comic books. She replies, "some are better than others, but certainly the associations in some of them are definitely undesirable." When the President's wife is asked about the hundreds of kids reading comics and spending large amounts of money on them, she becomes "greatly distressed."

Despite bad publicity, comics prosper. In 1945, 70,000,000 kids and adults read comics regularly. The *New York Times* reports more than 2,500 classrooms use Superman work books to teach reading.

It wasn't until 1949 that kids seriously entered the comic book controversy. Comics are beneficial and detrimental was the decision of six boys and girls ranging in age from nine to 13. According to one girl, comics are misnamed, not humorous or comical. "We imitate the characters in the book," said one youngster, "and by admiring the courage, bravery and honesty of the hero, we develop these traits." Lamented another, "bad comics ought not to be written as some kids develop the idea that the whole world is made up of crime."


JEEPERS! I BETTER CALL THE COPS!

A *New York Times* headline blares "Comics Denounced by South Africa" in March 1946. In Pretova, South Africa, American comic books are condemned as "subtle glorification of gangsterism" aimed at the "sadistic and sensational tendencies of the young." These quotes came from the National Council of Women in South Africa.

Reverend Robert Southard, a professor at Rockhurst College in Kansas City, Missouri states that comic books are "among the most effective instruments of propaganda because they are readily at the lowest level of awareness." He continues by saying that superheroes are "difficult symbols to crack, especially when they do commendable things such as helping Red Cross drives, or during the war aiding the war effort." These same super-humanitarians are in Southard's words "a kind of duplicate of the Christian ideal with pagan overtones" and "paper incarnations of the devastating Nietzsche Nazi philosophy of force." He concludes by asking "how can the heroism of battling weariness and fear be impressed through the fiction of irresistible heroes who cannot even feel pain?"

A worried mother from New Jersey wrote a letter in January 1947 about comic books. "Now, time and time again, we read that murders, especially juvenile delinquents, have gotten ideals from constantly listening to radio programs and reading comics, murder magazines, etc. . . . For years, women's organizations have worked against this menace but never has gotten anywhere."

A newspaper article expressed concern on the contents of comics two months later:

> *The comics which our kids study today and the passengers on the subway too, are covered chiefly with Japanese torture chambers, Nazi poison gas factories, foreign gangsters in quest of the atom bomb secret, kidnappers, stranglers, stabbing and other fiends in human form too numerous to mention, along with assorted nightmares in inhuman form such as vampires, ghouls . . . zombies and the like. All these words are now part of the comic vocabulary of U.S. children. But try to convince the average college professor or dictionary editor that a blood-curdling shriek in the night, followed by an agonized sobbing and then silence, is comic.*

Indianapolis police attacked comics in August 1947. Comics were described as "one of the contributing factors of the cause of juvenile delinquency" and as "unrestrained, bold, vicious, salacious and immoral." The police urged all civic, religious and educational groups to abolish all comics and literature that is "detrimental to the youth of the nation." Accordingly, American mothers were helpless to protect their kids from the "lurid booklets."

A coroner's jury in Pittsburg blamed the 1947 death of 12-year-old Billy Becker on comic books. Although the jury returned a verdict of accidental death, they cited dime thrillers as a contributing factor in Becker's death. The boy was found hanged by a clothesline. His mother told the jury that her son was "an incessant reader" of comic books and "probably hanged himself re-enacting one scene."

Comic books continued to get bad press in 1948. Two boys, age 11 and 12, stole a plane in Oklahoma City and flew it 120 miles. They claimed flying the plane was easy and that they learned how from reading a comic book.

Dr. Fredric Wertham was named Director of the Quaker Emergency Service Readjustment Center. He reported they were gaining wide support in the enactment of a state law controlling comic books. Nevertheless, Wertham admitted he was against censorship.

In a personal study, Wertham revealed a "typical" comic book that had 19 murders in it, including "shootings, stabbing, beatings and disintegration in a vat of acid." He told of a boy suspected of murder who claimed comic books were "educational."

A month later, in July 1948, a group of comic publishers implemented a self-policing plan to discourage crime as "objectionable

JEEPERS! DAME -- AND SHE'S BEEN CROAKED!

inspirations of youth." The publishers involved, representing less than a third of all comic books sold, wrote the following code of editorial standards:

> *Crime shall not be presented in such a way as to throw sympathy against the law and justice or to inspire others with the desire for imitation. No comics shall show the details or methods of crimes committed by a youth. Policemen, judges, governmental officials and respected insitutions shall not be portrayed as stupid or ineffective, or represented in such a way as to weaken respect for established authority. No scenes of sadistic torture. Sexy wanton comics should not be published. No drawing should show a female indecently or unduly exposed and in no event more nude than a bathing suit commonly worn in the United States. Vulgar and obscene language should never be used. Slang should be kept to a minimum and used only when essential to the story. Divorce should never be treated humorously nor represented as glamorous or alluring. Ridicule or attack on any religious or racial group is never permissible.*

Dr. Fredric Wertham again made the news in September 1948 when he called for an ordinance to protect children from "pollution by comic books." He accused comic books of suggesting "criminal or sexually abnormal ideas and creating an atmosphere of deceipt, trickery and cruelty."

The end of 1948 saw a law in Rochester, New York that forbade the sale of lurid comic books to any person under the age of 18. The books affected were those which prominently featured "an account of crime" or "which depict by use of drawings or photos, accounts of an indecent, immoral, obscene, lewd or lascivious nature or the commission of the crimes of arson, assault, burglary, kidnapping, mayhem, rape, larceny, manslaughter, prostitution, crimes against nature or extortion."

In 1949, comic books were targeted for even more protests. There was a comic book bonfire at the S.S. Peter and Paul Parochial School in Auban, New York and a public bonfire by Cub Scouts in Runson, New Jersey. Awards were given to the scout who collected the most books to burn. Also, in Washington D.C., the Army Charitable Guidance Council ordered lustier crime and horror comics from stands at army post exchanges.

Mayor James Curley of Boston, in 1949, appointed a "censor" to review comic books sold in local newsstands. His choice was James B. Connally, an 80-year-old writer of sea stories who admitted he had never seen a comic book before. Connally was paid $3,000 a year for the job.

At the same time, in Hartford, Connecticut, two Legislators introduced a bill in the House for a State Board to stop the distribution and sale of "objectionable comic books." The Board would set up its own code with violations punishable by fine or imprisonment.

The day came February 23, 1949 when the Senate passed the Feinberg Bill to regulate the publication and sale of comic books. The bill, sponsored by Republican Majority Leader Ben F. Feinberg, prohibited comic books from being published or distributed without filing an application along with a $3 fee for each book. Each book would have to state on the title page if a permit had been granted or not. Any comic not approved would have to be filed with the District Attorney at least 30 days before going on sale.

In Canada, a bill passed in the House of Commons on December 5, 1949, making it a criminal offense to publish or sell comic books depicting "any crime or containing obscene matter."

Dr. Lawrence Averill of State Teachers College spoke out against censorship before the American Association for the Advancement of Science the same month. He reported that comic books readers are only imitating their elders who want to escape the reality of "atom bombs, machines, and confusing life situations." He continued, saying children reading about heroes "may achieve a vicarious measure of security and a status they need."

Averill did mention "horror" comic books saying some of them "assume their readers to be little monsters with the brain of a child, the sex drive of a satyre and the spiritual delicacy of a gorilla." He concluded by saying comics total about one third of all 1949's magazine trade. "They are here to stay," he remarked.

The Apellate Department of Superior Court in Los Angeles found the ordinance banning the sale of crime comic books unconstitutional on December 28, 1949. The court ruled the same law would have prohibited the sale of school books portraying the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

Attitudes against comic books were slowly changing as evidenced by a letter written to *Christian Century* in 1955. Robert Lee, at Union Theological Seminary in New York wrote, "comics featuring brutality and violence are merely reinforcing values already prevalent in a society which glorifies the tough guys." Lee asks, "Could it be that we clergymen who are alarmed at comics are merely reflecting over our own failure to provide young people with values and spiritual resources which give meaning to life?"

An article in *Christian Century* dated March 30, 1955 best sums up common beliefs about comic books.

> *Care should be taken . . . not to exaggerate the harm done by the 'comics' nor to arouse false expectations of the good to be accomplished by cracking down on them. . . A California study showed that a large proportion of the habitual readers are adults, including 12 percent of schoolteachers. In addition, there is reason to believe that the publishers of the 'comics,' alarmed for their profits, have launched a fairly effective policy of self-censorship. Insofar as these books are a social menace . . . the cure would seem cultivation of interest in better reading on the part of youth. That is not a job for judges or police . . . but for the home and school . . . Raising the level of popular taste is not easy, but what has happened in the field of music in this century in the last twenty years shows that it can be done.* ●

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You get Killed!! KILLED QUICK IF YOU'RE LUCKY!
YOU AN' YOUR FRIENDS END UP OZONE AND I GET TURNED INTO PRIME PARTS!!

TEQUILA MOCKING BIRD

—Communications and Data Analysis Android—Mockingbird series *TK58

—Believed stolen/escaped from RoboCorp

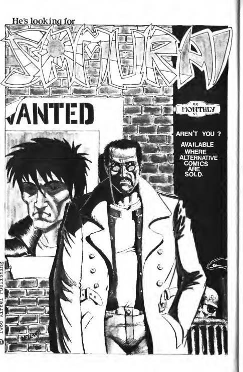
—Rebellious nature and unstable emotional make-up

make him a

THREAT!

A new monthly comics magazine from Fantagraphics Books

1985 Jim Rohn



COMICS IN REVIEW

MENTAL MENAGERIE

BATMAN AND THE OUTSIDERS #32
written and edited by MIKE W. BARR
illustrated by ALAN DAVIS
colored by ADRIENNE ROY
DC Comics
75 cents

In the small European country of Markovia, Princess Ilona is on her way to marry that nation's sovereign, King Gregor. She doesn't make it to the wedding, however, for she is kidnapped by the team of supervillains known as the Masters of Disaster. They are acting under the orders of Baron Bedlam, who launches a full-scale invasion of the tiny kingdom.

In Gotham City, America, Batman and the Outsiders smash a criminal ring that was responsible for the theft of life-saving plasma from a local hospital.

Afterwards, Geo-Force—who is also Prince Brion of Markovia—radios an associate and learns of the battle which is raging in his home land. Shockingly, he also learns that Batman already knew of the invasion and had deliberately withheld that information from him.

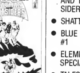
Justifiably perturbed, Geo-Force and the rest of the Outsiders take this opportunity to voice their dissatisfaction over the fact that nothing they do ever seems to please Batman. Therefore, Batman—displaying the full measure of his maturity—declares that the Outsiders are dissolved!

Teen-aged Halo quickly realizes that, even without Batman, the rest of them can continue to fuction as a team. Her comrades agree, and the five of them trot off happily arm-in-arm, as if on their way to see the Wizard of Oz.

The above pause was provided for those of you who lost their lunch after reading my synopsis of the sorry events in *Batman and the Outsiders* #32. I would call the story extremely weak, but it's more accurate to call it what it really is—asinine.

In a way, it is fitting that Batman leave the group in this way; after all, DC's scripters used nearly as flimsy a premise to get him to form it. You remember, Batman went to his friends and colleagues of the Justice League and demanded that they help him on a mission that, if it had taken place in his own title, he could have handled solo, with his eyes closed. The JLA was hesitant to invade a sovereign foreign nation on his behalf (which seems eminently understandable). Miffed, Batman packed up his marbles and quit the JLA.

That story went so strongly against Batman's character as it has been developed over the past 40 years, and was so transparent in its intent, that it was rather laughable. There is nothing funny about *BATO* #32, however. In it, the Caped Crusader actually seems to have crossed the line from being petulant to being a raving psychotic.



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Let's look at his actions. Batman claims a desire to help his city of Gotham, which has suffered by his absence with the Outsiders. He produces a newspaper whose headline reads, "Police Killed in Gang War". Earlier, a gangster refers to the fact that Bats has been gone for "days"—a reference that, to me, indicates he was away less than two weeks. Now, even in a gang war, how many cops

R.A.
JONES
on

- BATMAN AND AND THE OUTSIDERS #32
- SHATTER #3
- BLUE BEETLE #1
- ELEMENTALS SPECIAL #1
- TALES OF THE SUN-RUNNERS #1
- THE SHADOW #1

. . .and some words on Jack Kirby's art

are killed in the line of duty in a two-week period? Maybe four or five? Awful, yes—but weigh that against the fact that seven Markovian soldiers are murdered in just the first four pages of the story. Is our Batman that petty?

Then add to that the cold-blooded way in which Batman withheld the news of the war from Geo Force for two days. In 48 hours of all-out combat hundreds—even thousands—of men and women can lose their lives. This is less important than a gang war in Gotham? Batman keeps the entire team with him to recover stolen plasma. Forget the fact that other hospitals in Gotham were bound to have plasma, or that it could have been flown in from other cities. This was another job Batman could have handled alone or with Robin, freeing the Outsiders to go to Markovia and stop the war.

Batman's exclusive concern for Gotham appears doubly shallow and contrived to those of us who already know that he is simply being moved from the Outsiders to leadership of the Justice League (or are we to believe that the JLA will operate solely in Gotham City?)

Now take a look at the first panel on page 14. Batman, walking away from his charges, stops when he hears Halo cry "No!" He smiles, assuming she will beg him to stay—and the smile is demonic in appearance, making him look utterly evil. When he learns that the Outsiders intend to go on without him, Bats accuses them of abandoning *him*, the same way Dick Grayson did.

I don't know about you, but this isn't the way I care to see Batman portrayed. Grim, yes. Obsessed, yes. But here, he is shown to be petty, egomaniacal and outright paranoid. His characterization is so far off the mark that it appears to have been written by someone who doesn't even know who Batman is. If Superman was portrayed this way, he would probably rip off Jimmy Olsen's arm if Olsen bothered him by using his signal watch.

Why didn't Batman simply tell the Outsiders he was leaving because they had learned enough from him and were now ready to fly solo while he attended to other business?

Having been subjected to this fiasco, you then have to endure seven pages devoted to Looker, the nut case who has replaced Batman (doesn't scripter Mike Barr know any people who are mentally stable?). She's got a Jekyll-Hyde personality—self-righteously proclaiming she won't use her body to advance her position at work, while shamlessly using it to get a good table in an exclusive restaurant! Doubtless Mike is trying to show the jarring effects of her recent transformation—instead he merely comes across as someone who wants to use a female character in a sexist way without offending any feminists in the process. We're as confused as Looker is.

The entire premise behind her is disturbing, promulgating what is already an American obsesion with physical beauty. This would be more understandable if the former Emily Briggs had been truly ugly. She wasn't. She was plain; average actually.

Now, I have average looks. You probably do too. I've never considered that to be a major handicap.

The only praise I can muster for this issue is in the art department. Alan Davis has an exciting and dynamic style, one which looks somewhat like that of John Byrne if it was inked by Neal Adams. It never fails to impress. He does an especially good job with this issues one clever scene, in which Metamorpho uses his shape-shifting powers to imitate the form of Batman.

DC has also taken a page from the "Marvel Handbook of Hype," doubtless sucking in the speculators by proclaiming this is to be "the *last* issue of *BATO*" (which is technically correct, since the title changes with the next issue).

Generally speaking, *BATO* has been a good hook; one of the more enjoyable team titles. I have no reason to doubt that it will continue to be so.

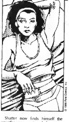
But issue #32 is a complete washout, and a disgrace to the image of the Batman.

CONNECT THE DOTS

SHATTER #3
written by STEVEN GRANT
illustrated by STEVE ERWIN and BOB DIENETHAL
colored by LES DORSCHEID
edited by RICK OLIVER
First Comics
$1.75

In some future world, talent can be transplanted. A method has been discovered whereby human RNA can be processed into a serum. Any injected with that serum then gains whatever talent was possessed by the RNA donor. The only flaw in the serum is that its effects are only temporary.

One man, however, having been injected with the RNA of an artist, shows no signs of losing that talent. His name is Sadr Al-Din Morales, though he is better—and more concisely—known as Shatter.



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Shatter now finds himself the unwilling pawn a struggle for power. A bizarre group known as the Alien Nation holds him captive, threatening to sell his brain to the highest bidder. The Artist's Underground wants to learn the secret of his talent retention. And the corporate entity SSJ just may kill them all.

This book has had a short but incredibly tumultuous history. It was conceived by Peter Gillis—who promptly got the boot so artist Mike Saenz could both write and illustrate the series. Saenz then eloped with his Macintosh, and there was serious speculation that *Shatter* would go with him on permanent honeymoon. Now word has it that Peter Gillis will return. One could more easily predict long-range weather patterns than guess what the future holds for *Shatter*.

For the present (and for issue #4 as well), the strip is in the hands of Steven Grant. Grant has attained that level of scripter's Nirvana wherein he professes to write solely for himself, without much caring what others think of his work. Perhaps this explains why his current work, in general, is of much higher quality than in years past.

That's not to say that he turns in a superior script here—he doesn't. It does make sense, though—and that alone puts it head and shoulders above what we had been getting in this book. Beyond that, it has all the necessary ingredients for a competent action-suspense thriller.

There's really little need, or sense, in dispensing heavy criticism of the scripting. After all, Grant is being asked to do little more than serve as a demolition man—making sure that everything gets blown to pieces so Peter Gillis can come in and lay his own new foundations for the series.

The artwork is what has always received the lion's share of the attention where *Shatter* is concerned. The computer graphics were as overhyped as Halley's Comet—and just as obscure to the naked eye.

Now we take a look at the second half of the Steve Squad—Erwin, in this case, who has been called upon to replace Saenz in the visual department. Here also we have a definite improvement. Thanks to the new techniques being used, we no longer see the same images repeated endlessly—though that was one of the few bits of perverse fun you could have with the old stuff, seeing how many times Saenz coud use the same picture with only slight adjustments in size or facial expression.

Erwin is a fine young artist, with a good sense of layout and action. It is unfortunate for him that many of his strong points are virtually obliterated by computerization. The computer's myriad dots and inability to produce a smoothly curved line are annoying distractions. I daresay this method would make Da Vinci's work look like a medical chart. It is a credit to Steve that the art comes off as well as it does.

I have been told, by people who are more knowledgeable about the subject than am I, that there are computer graphics available which are much superior to those found in *Shatter*. I can only assume that the cost and time involved in them must be prohibitive.

If such is indeed the case, I might suggest that First consider releasing *Shatter* only once or twice a year in special editions, allowing them the time to be done properly. I doubt if many comic fans would care if they saw it less frequently—and neither, for that matter, would those hackers who are drawn to it simply because it is produced on a computer.

If *Shatter* does attract a measureable new audience from outside of mainstream comics fandom, then I wish it the very best of luck. But even if they can improve the quality of the graphics up to the level of plain old human artistry (which they have not yet come close to doing), there is still very little in the way of plot, character and script about this series that would lead me to recommend shelling out nearly two bucks for every issues.

For now at least, erase it from your memory banks.

BEETLE JUICE

BLUE BEETLE #1
written by LEN WEIN
drawn by PARIS CULLINS
inked by BRUCE PATTERSON
colored by ANTHONY TOLLIN
edited by JULIUS SCHWARTZ
DC Comics
75 cents

Cities are not for burning—but a costumed maniac named Firefist doesn't seem to realize that. He is an arsonist extraordinaire, shooting tendrils of chemical flame which are nearly impossible to extinguish. He would appear to have a grudge against the Chicago fire department, having burned down both a station house and the home of the fire commissioner.

In comics, of course, supervillains never go unopposed. Firefist finds himself up against hero who (in real time) has not been seen in his own title for nearly two dozen years—the Blue Beetle.

Note: just to briefly pander to all you continuity junkies out there, I guess I should say that you'll probably have to consider this story to have taken place before the Crisis on Infinite Earths, as BB comments that this is his first day out of retirement, whereas we saw him in action against crooks in the first issue of *Crisis*. To non-continuity folks, ignore the above, and bless your souls.

The Beetle, as everyone out there should know, is one of the old Charlton characters purchased by DC several years ago. After gathering even more dust, they are finally being put to use (to which I say, "It's about time!"). BB is the first to be granted his own book, reportedly on the strength of the positive response garnered by his *Crisis* appearances.

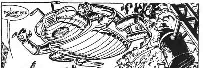
To all the young, aspiring writers in the audience, I would strongly suggest that they not only buy, but study *Blue Beetle* #1. It is the perfect textbook for constructing a standard superhero premiere issue in the modern era.

You open with an exciting action sequence to immediately draw the reader into the story. This also allows you to quickly introduce the leading character and demonstrate his powers and abilities. Here, the general locale, the specific menace and Blue Beetle himself are all presented in the first two pages. This is followed by a brief but fierce fight scene, capped off with a heroic rescue amidst an explosive catastrophe.

Follow this with three "quiet" pages. This allows introspection on the part of BB, letting us know who he is in his real identity (Ted Kord) and where his head's at. Also, since he is an already established character, it gives plenty of room for a brief recap of his origin.

The modern-day superhero needs to have a civilian life that is as fully developed as his costumed character. Given the basic structure of this title here, we learn that Ted Kord owns and operates a successful research and development corporation.

Use this opportunity to introduce the supporting cast. First we meet Angie Revere, Kord's super-efficient secretary—who, it is hinted, holds an unrequited love for her boss. Then come two of Kord's best researchers:


I THOUGHT HE'D RETIRED!

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a quirky but brilliant guy named Jeremiah Duncan; and a lovely lady named Melody Case, who is Kord's main squeeze.

Cut to Pago Island, where the original Blue Beetle died. Introduce a malevolent-looking fellow named Conrad Carapax and foreshadow a meance that will be rearing its head in a future issue.

Continue on this track while introducing yet more characters. Murry Takamoto, a scientist, asks Kord for help on a project that will have future implications; and police lieutenant Max Fisher, who has decided to reinvestigate the death of Dan Garrett (the above-mentioned orignal Blue Beete). In this way, you provide yourself with plot threads that can be carried for months, and simultaneously entice the reader to stay with you.

Finish it off with another slambang fight against Firefist, culminating in a cliffhanger ending, and you have crafted the prototype comic story—which is exactly what Len Wein has done here. I might disagree with his use of a cliffhanger, but aside from that he has fashioned the perfect standard origin issue.

Don't take that to be high praise—I would much prefer that Len had given us a story that was above the standard. Still, he made no fatal mistakes and was able to tell his story in a reasonably strong manner. He was even able to firmly establish that Blue Beetle is a part of the normal DC Universe without being heavy-handed about it (although I am curious as to why a Chicago newspaper is running a photograph snapped by Jimmy Olsen. Is there yet another story here?).

The biggest delight in this first issue derives from the triumphant return of penciller Paris Cullins to regular series work. His exuberant renderings added tremendously to the early success of another Blue—Devil that is. The spirit of fun is here as well, though he never goes too far into the realm of cartoonishness.

Those of us who remember the Beetle from his earlier incarnation hold fondest memories of the art of Steve Ditko (which was among the finest he has produced). Cullins pays homage to Ditko without resorting to imitation. He lets himself be guided by Ditko's "ghost"—but not haunted by it. Indeed, he strikes a fine compromise, using bits of Ditkoesque shtick on the costumed Beetle but allowing his own style to dominate every other aspect.

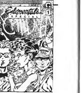
The energetic artwork is what really makes the book fun to read. And I would be remiss if I didn't extend kudos to Bruce Patterson as well. An extremely solid inker, Patterson has preserved and embellished every line of Cullins's pencilled work.

As I stated, the story here falls far below Hall of Fame satire, but it was good enough for me to give the book a qualified recommendation. Try *Blue Beetle* for a few issues; give it a chance to grow on and around you.

And I hope we'll soon be seeing solo appearances by the other Charlton characters as well.

THE FATHER'S SIN

ELEMENTALS SPECIAL #1
written by JACK HERMAN
drawn by BILL WILLINGHAM
inked by RICH RANKIN
Comico
$1.50



© 1986 Bill Willingham

As Monolith, he is a being of immense power, the power of the earth itself. But underneath that primal facade, he is really a 15-year-old named Tommy Czuchra. Tommy is being haunted by recurring nightmares—hideous dreams of small children being lured away by a faceless stranger who then brutally murders them.

The nightmares don't end when he awakens, however, for in each case his dreams come true. Tommy shares a psychic link with the killer, and he uses that link to track down the murderer. In a Seattle park, they meet face-to-face—and the connection between the two is frighteningly clear.

Child abuse is a current cause celebre with the various media. I have little doubt that, like other problems before it, this one will be driven into the ground and then just as quickly be ignored, as the ever-hungry newsmakers move on to a subject they have not yet milked to death. This is turn creates the illusion that the former problem no longer exists. (Wife-beating? Hey, we"cured" that didn't we? After all—I never read about it any more).

Morever, the media often drive home the wrong point. The focus of many child abuse stories is that you should not let strangers take liberties with your body—thus ignoring the fact that most sexual assaults on children are perpetrated by people they know and trust.

And what are mom and dad doing? Too often, they are happily allowing mechanical media to assume the parental guidance they lack the responsibility to give of themselves. They give their kids teddy bears that spew out prerecorded warnings against fondling! Where are the parents while little Jimmy and Jane are learning to relate to an inanimate object? Probably sitting on their ever-broadening asses, watching a prime time soap opera.

Morever, some psychiatrists and psychologists are now warning that we are creating a whole new problem. While it is prudent to teach a child caution, we are instilling in our young a suspicion, even a hatred, for all who are strange to them, all who are different. The imagined fear can sometime be as damaging as the actual menace.

How do the stern warnings that children protect themselves at all times relate to the Elementals story at hand? To my surprise and gratitude . . . not at all.

There is an obvious, and superficial, difference of course, in that this story doesn't deal with sexual abuse but rather with the outright murder of children. The larger distinction is not so easily discerned, especially early on.

I was somewhat shocked and horrified when I turned to page 19 and was greeted by the sight of the faceless stranger savagely plunging an icepick into a small boy's throat. I felt a sense of exploitation when, three pages later, the child's corpse is animated into some sort of malevolent, power-blasting zombie, one able to smile as a bullet burrows completely through his head.

"My god!" I thought, with disgust. "There's no way in hell a little kid should be exposed to these sorts of images."

And that's just the point. This story *isn't* meant for children; its message is not directed at them. Its target is me and you, as becomes evident only when we reach the climax of the tale.

In a floating netherworld between life and un-life, the faceless stranger reverts to his true form—that of a child who was beaten to death by his own parents. This puts the earlier scene in a different perspective. That child, the victim of horrible violence, returns to mete out equal violence to others.

This is one area in which, to a very real degree, the sins of the father are visited on the son. Many men who beat their wives saw their fathers beat their mothers. Many adults who abuse children were themselves abused when they were young. We create our own monsters.

That's the message of this story. The danger to our children doesn't come from faceless strangers—it comes from us. The solution to the problem lies not in stronger locks on our doors but in a greater respect for life; an abolition of the mindless violence that makes humans the beastliest creatures to ever roam this planet.

Scripter Jack Herman, along with series creator and artist Bill Willingham, is to be commended for his effort here. It aptly demonstrates the power that the comic book medium can display, even under the guise of superheroics. We have seen scores of costumed champions save the world scores of times; we have become jaded to its import. But the salvation of a single soul, as presented here, can still touch us to the core, can make us understand true heroism. It is to be recommended.

And if a single mother or father can read it and then look at their own son or daughter with new insight and appreciation—then it is a treasure beyond price.

CHANGE YOUR PARTNERS

TALES OF THE SUNRUNNERS #1
written by ROGER McKENZIE
drawn by GLEN JOHNSON
inked by JIM SINCLAIR
colored by MARCUS DAVID
Sirius Comics
$1.50

The cast members of *Sunrunners* are still caught in their various dilemmas. The aquatic female, Delphi floats languorously in a trauma tank, close to death. Doctor Katz seeks to find a cure for her condition. Mark Dancer struggles with the dark forces within him.

But the main focus of the story remains on the tusked Doctor Gibralter. He is taken to the place known as Threshold; there lies the ailing Lord Phant, the father Gibralter never knew. Having believed himself to be the product of genetic restructuring, Gilbralter is still reeling from his discovery of an entire race of elephantine beings. His mind won't let him accept the fact that one of those beings is his parent.

Yet though he attempts to deny his heritage, he cannot ignore his calling, and he tries to save the life of the aged patriarch. All his skill as a doctor goes for naught, however, and Lord Phant expires—after first touching Gibralter's forehead and calling out the single word: "Remember."

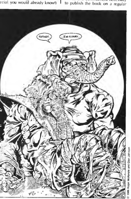
Gibralter is charged with finding a mystical sword. If it should fall into the hands of the Sunrunner's evil brother Tuck, it will be used to unleash a horde of ravenous demons. When Gibralter and his friends are attacked by a small aircraft, he destroys the vessel by using magic—a power he never before possessed.

And as he ponders this development, the reader is left to wonder which of the valiant Sunrunners is doomed to die in the next issue. (Of course, if you had bothered to buy the recent *Amazing Heroes Preview Special*, you would already know!)

Figuratively speaking, *Sunrunners* has been like a flighty coquette, bounding from the arms of one publisher into those of another (It is now working on its third). This has proven to be frustrating for all concerned: the publishers, the creators and the fans. Its travails and subsequent delays have eaten away much of its audience.

Indeed, while reading this latest issue, I found myself thinking that the current storyline had dragged on forever. Such is not the case, of course; in terms of the actual number of issues involved, the series has not run as long as the horrendous second edition of *Secret Wars*. It has been two years, however, since *Sunrunners* debuted. With consecutive issues often appearing months apart, it is no wonder that many readers lost track of the story. The next step was for them to lose interest.

I hope that trend will now be halted, that Sirius Comics has the means and commitment necessary to publish the book on a regular


FATHER...
...I'M SORRY...

© 1986 Roger McKenzie and Glen Johnson

schedule and for an extended period of time. Creator/scripter Roger McKenzie has certainly proven his dedication to the series and a willingness to do whatever he can to make it a success.

He is doing his share by crafting an entertaining story. If it had appeared on schedule throughout its existence, I think you would have found it to be a brisk, quickly paced tale. He has created an interesting cast of characters and placed them in a world of danger and excitement.

From the beginning, McKenzie has been fortunate in sharing the workload with talented artists. The series' initial illustrator was Pat Broderick, who hs been a dependable comics pro for more than a decade. When Pat left the book, McKenzie found a capable replacement in the team of Glen Johnson and Jim Sinclair.

A newcomer to the field, Johnson is still developing as a penciller, and he shows every indication of eventually growing into a fine one. He has a mainstream style that is clean and sharp.

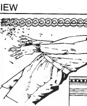
I responded favorably to the very first appearance of *Sunrunners* and have maintained that position. It is not truly outstanding graphic fiction—but it is a good, enjoyable piece of science fantasy adventure. Many readers, having been twice burned by the series, may initially shy away from its latest incarnation.

But if the current publishers will hang tough and prove to the fans that the book will appear on schedule, I think they will find their readership gradually growing and flourishing.

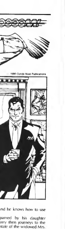
Give it a try before you write it off as a lost cause.

SHADOW BOXING

THE SHADOW #1
written and illustrated by HOWARD CHAYKIN
colored by ALEX WALD
DC Comics
$1.50



Howard Chaykin's new SHADOW: A fascination with violence.



1986 Conde Nast Publications

It begins with a weekend party in Malibu, hosted by Clyde Burke, the author of a new mystery novel. The festivities are dampened somewhat when Mr. Burke is found with a skewer through his neck, dangling from an indoors balcony.

And in the Himalayas, a mysterious man who has not been seen in America since 1949 begins the long trek home.

On New York City's 42nd Street, a pair of thugs handcuff a derelict called Hawkeye to a porch rail and set him afire. A youth counselor named Clifford Marsland is found floating grotesquely inside a water cooler. In Miami, a hired killer places a bullet through the head of one Moe Shrevnitz. In a quiet hospital room, an ersatz nurse beats Jericho Druke to death with a bedpan. A group of elderly nudists is massacred in cold blood.

The next target for assassination is Harry Vincent, a carnival magician. The attempt takes place inside his own van, on the side of which is painted the legend "The Shadow Knows." Unfortunately for the would-be killers, Harry once inherited a pair of formidable .45 caliber automatic pistols—and he knows how to use them.

Accompanied by his daughter Mavis, Harry then journeys to the palatial estate of the widowed Mrs. Marilyn Forsythe—a woman once known as Margo Lane. The murders all have one glaring connection—the victims were all former associates of the man Harry Vincent called Master, the man Margo Lane loved until he disappeared 37 years ago.

Piercing, almost maniacal laughter fills the room, and they find themselves faced by an intense young man who may actually be older than time.

One of his names is Lamont Cranston.

The Shadow is one of the greatest heroes to come from the era of pulp fiction. Along with such contemporaries as Doc Savage, Conan and (beginning from an even earlier time) Tarzan, he has withstood the test of time. Though at times his popularity has waned, he has always returned on one form or another.

In many ways, comics are a direct descendant of the pulps, and it is only appropriate that they keep the legacy alive. Indeed, all four of the above-listed pulp heroes have also starred in various comics.

And now the Shadow is again upon the land, courtesy of scripter/illustrator Howard Chaykin. Chaykin has brought the Shadow into the '80s and, in this first issue at least, makes it work. Word is that some of his interpretations of the character may disconcert Shadow purists, but since I am not numbered among their ranks I came in with no inbuilt prejudices one way or the other.

Having read only a few of the original Shadow novels, and those several years ago, my knowledge of the series does not rate me as an expert. Still, there is some flavor of the pulps here, though heavily spiced with 1980s relish.

As is amply demonstrated here, Chaykin appears to have developed a fascination with violence of late—not with the reality of it, certainly, but rather with the art of it. Man has devoted an inordinate amount of imaginative energy in the development of new ways to torture, maim, and kill his fellow man.

Even the most placid of us can find ourselves drawn to the manifestations of violence, our genuine repugnance laced with a subtle yet undeniable craving to experience it on a vicarious level.

Doubtless, Chaykin has experienced this as well and, as an artist, is in a position to explore that dichotomy fully, to tantalize both himself and us with images that depict death in all its splendid brutality. That savage side within us all can still be aroused by the scent of fresh blood. This is deplorable but true, and Chaykin plumbs these depths with an unflinching, almost detached intensity.

Carrying over from his work on *American Flagg!*, Chaykin also continues to spotlight outre forms of sexual arousal as well. The villain of this piece—an elderly, wheelchair-bound magnate named Preston Mayrock—maintains a bondage bordello with which to entertain his clients. Even more bizarre is the method he has devised to satisfy the erotic appetites of his lovely, nymphomaniacal young wife, Mercy.

He has bred his own "son"—a strapping, nearly mindless Preston Jr. The elder Mayrock, himself impotent, is able to project his mind into the younger man's body and thus enjoy a measure of physical intimacy. (And when Mercy discovers that Junior possesses the ability to perform the same function even without "Dad's" help, she is doubly ecstatic.)

Visually, Chaykin's art is a stunning as that he delivered for *Flagg!* for the last few years. The world he has created is definitely modern, but it also captures the essence of a 1930s drama.

The story alone is capable of carrying its own weight, though: it is a taut, intriguing mystery beneath the violence and sex. What is Mayrock's ultimate plan? Why is he systematically killing the Shadow's compatriots? Why did the Shadow disappear for such a long period? And why has he decided to return?

Like me, you will probably find yourself screaming to know the answers to these and other questions. Howard Chaykin has taken this classic character and done right by him. It is a hardhitting tale; no punches are pulled, no perversion is glossed over. It is not for children or those of tender sensibilities—it blazes at you like twin .45s held in the muscled hands of a grim avenger.

The weed of crime bears bitter fruit—but the exterminator has returned to business.

The Shadow has the look of a winner. I recommend it.

POINT OF VIEW

I recommend that you read the latest issue of *The Comics Journal* (#105), which is largely devoted to Jack Kirby's struggle to regain his original artwork back from Marvel.

Whatever the reasons for its intransigence (and there may be some very good ones), by withholding comment Marvel has only heightened the perception that it is a heartless corporate monolith bent on crushing the spirit of a single man. And not just any many, but one who creators and executives alike agree was a major force in shaping the form of comic art in the modern era. A man who deserves to be treated better by his own.

The *Journal* has been crusading virtually alone on Jack's behalf, but it would carry even more weight if you readers made your views known to Marvel. By that I don't mean you should threaten or heap bile upon them—that would only serve to make them more defensive and inflexible. It would probably be best for all if both Marvel and Jack could get out of this mess with their dignity relatively intact.

What you might try is this: every time you write a letter to any Marvel comic, on any subject—send it with a simple postscript to the effect that you would like for them to resolve the dispute with Jack Kirby as quickly and as equitably as possible.

The comics industry as a whole has problems enough to face today and in the future. Those of the past should be resolved so that we all can move forward. You are an integral part of that industry, and your voice can make a difference. ●

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He's Back!
ETERNITY SMITH
In July from Renegade Press

JACK KIRBY PETITION

I, the undersigned, believe that Marvel Comics should place no conditions upon the immediate return of Jack Kirby's original art. I regret Marvel's shameful treatment of and ingratitude toward its most inspired, imaginative, and productive founding father, without whom there might not be a Marvel Comics today. Furthermore, I wish to express my appreciation and love for Jack Kirby, who, by his unparalleled talent and his life-long devotion to comic book art, enriched the lives of comics readers everywhere.

(signed)

Name (print)

Address

(date)

Please return to
The Comics Journal
4359 Cornell Rd., Agoura, CA 91301

AMAZING READERS

BILLY FORD
Richmond, VA

Has Byrne Bitten Off More Than He Can Chew?

Regarding *Amazing Heroes* #82. I just want to express some views on John Byrne's plans for the "Big Red S."

I liked Byrne's streamlined, moderately muscled Superman in *Superman* #400. Wayne Boring's Superman was too godlike and majestic. Curt Swan's version was more human, but his Superman had too many mucles. He was a Kryptonian version of "Mr. Universe." Joe Shuster's Superman had style, but the figure was squat and chunky. His Superman looked like an amateur wrestler.

Byrne once said he was like a "sponge" who absorbed "characteristics of other artists' styles." His Superman is certainly a conglomeration of other artists' versions. Byrne has even structured Superman's face to resemble Christopher Reeve's visage.

The article states that "Amazingly, the prolific Byrne will continue writing and drawing his Marvel assignments." Amazingly, the *Comics Buyer's Guide* recently reported that Byrne will leave *The Incredible Hulk* as of issue #320.

I don't support Byrne's decision of not reinstating the defunct romance between Lois Lane and Superman. Their romance is as imprinted in the public's conscience as is the eons-old romance between Popeye and Olive Oyl. Some things are not meant to be changed—like Superman's costume. To make it interesting, Byrne should have Lana Lang liking Clark Kent and Lois Lane liking Superman. [*That's been done too. —Ed.*]

Byrne shouldn't limit Superman's powers any futher. Superman already has such limits as Kryptonite, red sun, and magic. Superman has already been "knocked out of the sky" by such ultra-powerful beings as Faora, the Kryptonite Man, Maaldor, Solomon Grundy, the Spectre (remember *DC Comics Presents* #29), and, most recently, the Anti-Monitor. Also, eliminating the time travel is very unnecessary. Seeing Superman travel in time while the years flash by in progression was an engaging concept. Indeed, Superman has been doing this for so long, it's become one of his hallowed trademarks. Although Superman could travel through time, he couldn't change history.

Eliminating Superbaby is a smart move since *that* series read like a parody out of Harvey Kurtzman's *Mad*. It seemed out of place in the Superman mythos. However, eliminating Superboy will destroy a vital part of the mythos. As a title, *Superboy* has been around since 1949. That's too many good stories for Byrne to declare "there will be no Superboy." The Superboy feature introduced the Legion of Super-Heroes and Superboy has been a cornerstone of that organization for years.

As for Luthor, it seems to me that one reason he has hated Superman is that he *has* been jealous of Superman's power. This is why Luthor developed those "power gloves" in the '70s and, later, hated Superman for causing him to lose his hair as a teenager. But as he grew older, Luthor seemed to be motivated more by jealousy in his hatred for Superman. In a 1961 story called "The Conquest of Superman," (*Action* #277) Luthor expresses that not only does he want "revenge" on Superman, but he also wants to "make the world know that *he* is "Superman's master."

I wish Byrne all the luck in his plans for the "Big Red S," but I think he's bitten off more than he can chew this time. It's dangerous to change a character who is the epitome of modern American mythology.

★ *Personally, I don't think we should imagine that John's bitten off more than he can chew until we've actually seen what he's regurgitated up. In other words, let's give the guy a chance.* —*ABC*

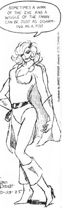

SOMETIMES A WINK OF THE EYE AND A WIGGLE OF THE FANNY CAN BE JUST AS DISARMING AS A FIST
10-23-85

Illustration by JAMES BRANDT character © DC Comics Inc

KEVIN V. MAZYCK
Brooklyn, NY

Defending the Crisis

This letter is to address the letter written by Jeff Melton in *AH* #84. Jeff complains that despite collecting for nine years DC would not print his anti-Crisis letter. Jeff, I have one question. Where does DC *print* any Crisis letters, pro or con? Immature and unthinking readers like Jeff Melton explain to me why the *Secret Wars* fiasco was so popular. He then speaks of the multiple earths, a concept that after years of being a great commodity, became a point of ridicule. I take great offense, as a fan, that Jeff believes Marv Wolfman alone decided who would live and who died. Most fans have heard of a publisher, an editor-in-chief and managing editors.

There is also a statement saying that some of the multiple earths such as "X" deserve their own series. Of course, if Jeff was a *true* fan, he'd know that Earth-X's heroes had a title and it was cancelled because no one bought it. Also, every day would not be a struggle because the war had ended (thanks to the JLA/JSA). So much for the idea of potential never realized.

Obviously you forgot that *Crisis* was a 12-issue series and so your explanation of psychological trauma is ill-fitting as well as ill-concieved. You've probably discovered as a result of *Crisis* #12 that only the alternate futures (Kamandi, Omac) were wiped out, thereby cementing DC's continuity. Soon we'll be told which stories between 1935 and 1985 are conducive to the new DC universe and whether they "happen" or not doesn't change the fact that they were published and were, for the most part, enjoyable.

And while Marv Wolfman had no heartfelt love for the character of Supergirl, I'm sure every person who's ever read a story featuring her will agree that her role in Crisis was her finest moment. After all, almost every Supergirl story outside of the Legion were not literary gems.

Jeff wants those who read his letter to believe that he had the utmost respect for The Flash and then he calls his death—after weeks of torture and captivity at the hands of a lunatic and a menace that killed heroes, villains, and universes—pointless and blasphemous. You mention that there will never be another character as "human as Barry Allen." Well, here's a surprise, Jeff: humans do die. Writers now have an obligation to inject reality into their scripts and this sometimes includes death, or, as in this case of Wildcat, serious injury. He was injured in a manner perfectly in character, helping those who needed it to safety. There was no mockery of his career and if Jeff did his research he'd know that this "new" Wildcat was to be the original's protege in Infinity Inc. Her name was to be "La Gata" (The Cat) and obviously she was held back and changed due to the fact that Wildcat was to be injured during the Crisis.

Finally, I'd like to address your statement that DC Comics cares little for their longtime readers. As one, I feel that DC has more than met any expectations anyone could've had for them. For years they have been libeled for attacks on their continuity due to a new story not meshing with a story published 20-40 years ago. Now, so that every reader and his uncle won't write a letter stating that Batman couldn't do this because in 1953 he said that, DC has taken a direct stand on what has happened in the past, is taking place now and the general direction the future will take. I, for one, am proud to have *Crisis on Infinite Earths* in my collection. This series, as well as other DC books and the independents, creates hope that the comic industry won't fall to the level of the *Secret Wars* embarrassment and the general level of the Marvel line.

Despite the fact that your letter saw print, I do not believe that more than half a handful of real comic fans were displeased with the 12-issue odyssey.

BILL D. MIDDLETON
Clovis, NM

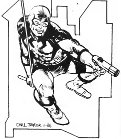


Illustration by CARL TAYLOR, character © DC Comics Inc.

Problems with Marvel

Your lettercol is always one of the most interesting parts of this magazine and issue #83 was no exception. Marv Wolfman has been a major talent for a lot of years and it's nice to know that success hasn't spoiled the man. His letter in this issue giving George Perez credit for his complete work on *Crisis* shows that the comics industry still has its denizens of integrity.

G.O. Foster's letter was also good food for thought. I agree with most of what he said about the current state of Marvel Comics, but there are a few points I disagree with him on. First, in his blanket condemnation of Marvel, he unfortunately gave the impression that most newcomers to the comics field can't hold a candle to the old pros. This is a very simplistic view of things. And besides, you just can't blame a few inexperienced talents for faulty editorial policy.

My biggest problem with Marvel is their puzzling editorial and corporate policies. I think their recent treatment of Jack Kirby is a sin and their flooding the market with products of questionable quality has hurt the industry as much as it has possibly helped. I am also sick of mutants, hype overkill, and comics that can't seem to keep the same creative team for more than one issue. Another thing that really bothers me about Marvel is their seeming unconcern for the opinions and views of fandom in general. I can't remember the last time I've seen a letters page in some of their comics and the absence of any negative letters, and in the pages that do appear, I feel is seriously undergrading any claim to objectivity that this company once had.

Still, if you are a serious fan and collector, you can't ignore Marvel, and believe me there have been times when I was tempted. However, on the average, I suppose 30 percent of all the comics I buy each month are Marvels. *The Avengers* and the *Fantastic Four* are as good as they have ever been, and new series like *Cloak and Dagger* and *Squadron Supreme* are very promising. Even *X-Factor* may prove to be interesting, if only for the fact that it is the only Marvel mutant comic that's not under the thumb of Chris Claremont. I also enjoy reading Marvel's Epic line and even though some of their titles have been real dogs, comics like *The One*, *Time Spirits*, *Dreadstar* and Six From Sirius make me very glad I started collecting comics again about six years ago. I would, however, be hard pressed to recommend very many of Marvel's other books. The quality of comics like *Thor*, *Spider-Man*, and Capt. *America* is at an all time low, and this year has marked a record for the release of boring mini-series by this company.

It wouldn't bother me so much if the above-mentioned complaint were the sum total of Marvel's current problems. After all, DC, Eclipse, and First have all suffered similar quirks in the past. Marvel, however, with comics like the *New Mutants* and *Secret Wars II*, seems hell-bent for leather on offending my pesonal moral beliefs. I can hear you now, "Oh no, not another one of those guys." But give me a chance and I hope the following will at least make a little sense.

First of all, I am not promoting censorship in any shape, form or fashion. If something affects me continually in a negative sense, the company or person responsible for it will very quickly lose my patronage. I feel much the same way about hard-core pornography. Most porn is tasteless, and even worse, boring, but I will defend the right of any adult American to purchase such material as long as we live in a country that was built on the Constiution and Bill of Rights.

So what the heck has all this got to do with comic books? Well, let me give you a few examples. I have never been a big fan of the New Mutants. I have been even less of one since the Satanic transformation of Illyana Rasputin. I'll ask you, is the character portrayed on the cover of *Magik* #4 one that you would want your son or daughter to identify with? This mini-series in particular was one of the most depressing pieces of trash I have ever witnessed in comics. To date, I have yet to see a child in a comic story that was physically and mentally degraded as Illyana was in this one. Secondly, I was very unimpressed with the ending of *Secret Wars II*. I, along with everybody else that was dumb enough to read this series, was wondering how in the world the Marvel super-heroes were going to finally defeat the Beyonder. Who would have thought that he would merely be turned into a human baby and slaughtered for the sake of a sensationalistic ending?

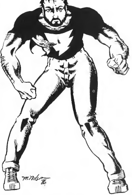


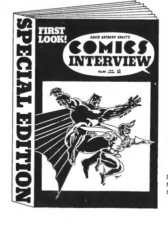
Illustration by MATT NELSON, character © Matt Wagner

I really can't believe how sick and negative some of Marvel's stories are these days. It's really strange also how Marvel and many in fandom can be so hypocritical in regards to certain questions of moral taste. First, it really makes me wonder why Marvel bothers publishing a special comic on child abuse, when most of their stories dealing with child characters are often more degrading to youngsters than anything that would probably happen in real life. Secondly, it disturbs me that a comic such as *Void Indigo* (which was a very well-written and drawn story) can raise so much protest from fandom and the comics industry because it contained a little more blood and guts than the average comic story. While this may be true, I still believe that *Void Indigo* had a strong underlying moral beneath the surface gore and that every character that died in the story deserved what they got, considering how they were portrayed in this certain book. The moral theme of *Void Indigo* was good versus evil, and in this series the gray line that Marvel uses to defend many of their books ceased to exist. More importantly, this book was not written for, or sold, to my knowledge, to children and thus does not conflict with my previously stated beliefs. *The New Mutants* and *Secret Wars*, however, are available to kids at any corner drug store and I fear that in the long run they may have questionable mental and moral effects on the children who read them.

So what have I proved with this letter? Probably nothing, but then again if nothing else, it has made me feel a little better personally. The first stories of *Spider-Man* and *Captain*

FRANK MILLER'S DARK KNIGHT

Issue #31 of David Anthony Kraft's COMICS INTERVIEW features a DARK KNIGHT cover by Miller and an exclusive and very revealing inside interview with Frank that offers an advance look at his stunning new DC series, complete with illustrations and even sequences from the first and second issues of DARK KNIGHT!



Also in COMICS INTERVIEW #31 --

FRED FINGER, son of the man who is the Dark Knight's forgotten co-creator, shares the sad secrets of his father's life. BOB KANE offers a candid conversation about the creation of The Batman. We take you from the First Batman Story behind the scenes into a seldom-seen side of comics, all the way to Miller's Last Batman Story!

ALL THIS -- AND MUCH, MUCH MORE IN ISSUE #31...

Sure to be a sales sensation -- so order accordingly.

America are among some of the first that got me interested in comics as a child. These old stories were not only nice pieces of fantasy, but they also made me feel good about myself as a human being and gave a young boy fictional role models that might some day help him get his own life together.

In closing, I would like to apologize if this letter came off as being a little too preachy, but some of the things I've covered here have been bothering me for a long time. Thanks for reading this and peace from the desert.

★ *You raise some interesting points, Bill, but I think you've oversimplified the good vs. evil aspects of how comic power fantasies appeal to younger readers, who, after all, are going through periods of difficult transitions in their lives. On one level (and only one, as there are many others in this kind of reading), Illyana Rasputin is not coping with evil per se, but with her sexuality—or her coming maturity. She's changing, she's becoming an adult, and that's the level upon which the story works. I recommend you see, or rent, the film* The Company of Wolves, *with a screenplay co-written by Angela Carter, the noted British writer, famous for her explorations of the dark side of fairy tales. Comics are literally kid stuff compared to this Freudian, very complex rendition of the Little Red Riding Hood story, which seeks to, ah, penetrate to the real truth as to what the tale is all about.*

Kids today are growing up in a world where moral ambiguity is not as hidden as it was a few decades ago. The cultural turmoil of the '60s exposed that, though modern culture frequently explored the themes previously. The simple comics of our youth simply wouldn't connect with young readers today. —ABC

WAYNE G. HAMMOND
Williamstown, MA

Ill-Considered X-Factor

The *X-Factor* preview in *Amazing Heroes* #83 was a welcome confirmation of what the first two issues of this title have made clear: though *X-Factor* is bound to be another marketing success for Marvel, as a concept its ill-considered and insulting. The original X-Men are concerned about mutant hysteria, so of course they publicize "one of the most urgent problems of our time," encouraging a climate of fear and suspicion and thereby adding fuel to the flames. And as for Mike Carlin's comment in the preview that X-Factor won't be "breaking the law at any time in the future," he might consider the illegality of fraud and deceptive advertising, not to mention what Cyclops and company did in #1 to military equipment and personnel.

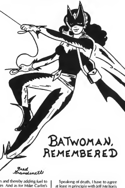


Illustration by FRED GRANDINETTI character © DC Comics Inc

A more serious issue is the resurrection of Jean Grey. I'm an X-fan from #7 and as sentimental as the next guy, but do you remember Jim Shooter's comments as of a few years ago? He was quoted in *Amazing Heroes* #3: "I feel that one of the things the Marvel Universe has always had going for it is an air of credibility. If we keep pulling people back from the dead anytime we damn well please, we're threatening that credibility. So as far as I'm concerned, Jean Grey is dead. . . That's it. That's irrevocable." And it was *Jean Grey* specifically, who was dead, not "just a force from the cosmos." Bringing Jean back not only hurt Marvel's credibility, it insulted all the readers who grieved, and cursed, and sent flowers, and wote elegies after *X-Men* #137.

Speaking of death, I have to agree at least in principle with Jeff Melton's comments in #84 on *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, premature though some of those comments were. Art, your answer to his letter was too glib: if Jeff, or I, didn't take "the world of comics" seriously, caring about the characters and events presented there as much as we would about those in *War and Peace* or any serious novel, or film, or play, no doubt we wouldn't read comics at all (let alone *Amazing Heroes*). And the fact that Jeff, or I, can be distraught over the radical changes in *Crisis* is merely a tribute to the storytelling skills of the writers and artists who made the DC Universe what it was. While I'm prepared to give the post-*Crisis* era a chance, like Jeff I'm unhappy that DC chose to "simplify" something that was always interesting in its very complexity, and to celebrate 50 years of creativity by killing (or even "killing") some of their best creations—Supergirl, Barry Allen's Flash, the Huntress, et al—however stylish Marv Wolfman's writing, however beautiful George Perez' art, and however right you may be that "nobody dies forever in comics."

small press watch

by Scott McCloud

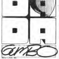
"Small press" is a catch-all term for comics with low enough print runs that any profit is negligible. Many are photocopied and all titles listed here are in black and white on white paper unless otherwise noted. Page count includes covers.

To order any of the items on this page, just send a short note with your name and address on it listing the comic(s) you want and enclose your payment. Cash is fine and recommended on small orders, but make sure it doesn't show through the envelope. Also tape down any loose change. The address for each item appears at the beginning of its review. Please *do not* try to order from me or from *Amazing Heroes*.

I'll indicate postage on each item. "Ppd" = post-paid (price includes postage). Stamps, unless otherwise noted, should be the regular 22¢ first class type.

Letters of comment are welcomed by just about everyone and if you have comics of your own, trades can often be arranged. You're welcome to send them to me too. I can only review a fraction of what comes out, but I'll definitely read it and try to respond with a postcard at least. You can reach me at PO box 698, Tarrytown NY, 10591-0698. (Comments about this column should be sent to *AH* as usual.)

—SCOTT McCLOUD



7" x 8½"/20 pages
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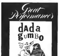

4"⅛ x 5½"/16 pages,
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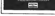
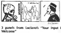


3 panels from Luciano's "Your Input Is Welcome"



Part of J.R. Williams's page from DADA GUMBO #7.

All art © 1985 Dale Luciano except where indicated

© 1985 J.R. Williams

DADA GUMBO #6 and #7 by various artists.
$3.00 and a stamp for both/Dada Gumbo Press, c/o Dale Luciano, 810 Glendale, Ashland, OR 97520-2519. (Separately: DG #6 is $2.00 ppd., DG #7 is $1.00 and a stamp.

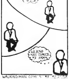
Dada Gumbo Press is the brainchild of columnist Dale Luciano who put in a strong bid for Mensch-of-the-Year in '85 when *The Comics Journal* printed his 81-page survey of what he and others refer to as "newave comix." In the course of his research, Luciano "caught the bug," so to speak, and began producing some small press comics of his own, soon expanding operations to include the work of several other cartoonists in the field. I'm going to just focus on *Dada Gumbo* itself, but even if you don't order the magazine, I suggest you write for the latest list of DGP publications (including a terrific mini-trilogy by Steve Willis).

Dada Gumbo is an anthology title featuring one- and two-page comics and illustrations by a number of small press's more noteworthy talents. Not all of the features are really Dada in the formal sense of the word, though the term "inspired nonsense" could probably be applied to the project as a whole. Basically, the contributions fall into three categories: the ones that have little to do with Dada per se (such as a short excerpt from Willis's *The Tragedy of Morty* reviewed last issue, or Norman Dog's bizarre but ultimately rational satire "The Man Who Knew Too Much" in *DG #7*); single illustrations and cartoons with Dadaist sensibilities, and occasionally, strips that actually exploit the rich potential in comics for the Dada of irrational sequence. Contributors Jim Ryan, Rick Geary, and Luciano himself have struck this vein once or twice, but much more could be mined from it if the artists are willing.

With his survey, Luciano made a brave attempt to apply serious critical standards to a movement few people were willing to take seriously, and, at the same time, kept the sense of fun in his own ventures that's given small press in general most of its energy. In the former case, he may have treated some comics with more seriousness than they deserved, and in the latter, he might do well to take the idea of comics as Dada a bit more seriously; but overall, he's one of the Good Guys, and I wish him luck.

WALKING MAN COMICS #1-6 by Matt Levin.
$2.00 plus four stamps from Matt Levin, 44 Lincoln, Northampton, MA 01060

Matt Levin's mini-comics are, as far as I know, the only ones done almost entirely with rubber stamps. They tend to look a bit rough and chowdery at first but once read, their unique appeal emerges quickly. Oh, they're strange, make no mistake. Levin's *Walking Man* has no story and virtually no dialogue. Its figures drift through dreamlike, shifting fields of flying fish, dragons, and rebel panel borders. They aren't just random doodles, though. Levin deliberately arranges his images in a cyclical, very poetic sort of narrative. A strong sense of nostalgia runs through most of the series, but it's a peculiar kind of nostalgia, made of half-remembered places and long seasons running together from year to year. It's a very personal vision, but not an inaccessible one. No two readers will react to *Walking Man* in the same way, but all of them will, I think, find something of their own experiences in it. It's hard for me to give an effective impression of this comic without showing you one (they aren't well-suited for reproduction here), but I hope the more adventurous among you will give it a try. With the right attitude on the part of the reader, *Walking Man* can be a rewarding experience.



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